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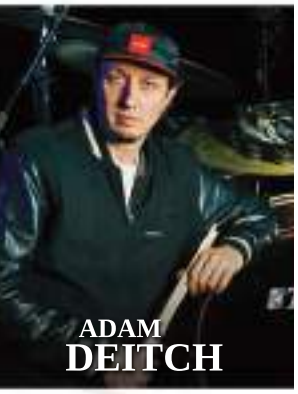

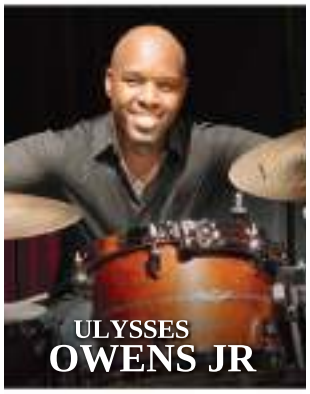

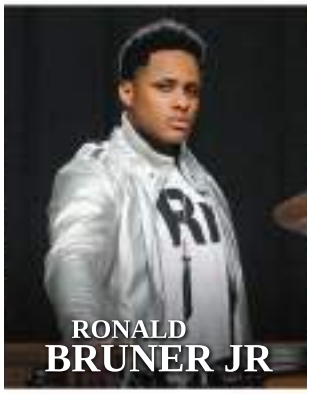

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CONTENTS

Volume 40 • Number 7

30 On the Cover

GEAR OF THE YEAR

The most compelling drums, cymbals, and accessories of 2016.

FEATURES

18 Catching Up With…SIMON PHILLIPS and JAE SINNETT

42 GREG WELLS. Musicians who find great success are often the ones who remain the hungriest for new experiences. This invaluable asset for the likes of Katy Perry and Pink certainly supports that theory. by Stephen Belans

50 ADAM RUDOLPH. Complexity, variety, and individuality may define the percussionist/leader's work, but spirituality guides it. by Jeff Potter

54 JOSH BLOCK. His work with the proggy indie band White Denim always oozed with feel. So it's really not that much of a surprise that neo-soulster Leon Bridges has put his grooves in Block's hands. by Jeff Ryan

60 GET GOOD: PLAYING ON TV. There are more variety shows than ever on television today. With these ten tips in mind, you'll be ready when it's time for your close-up. by Mike Arturi

86 ENCORE: BLACK SABBATH'S *PARANOID*. BILL WARD might not be traversing the globe with the rest of Sabbath's original lineup during the band's current farewell tour. But recordings like this one are *forever*. by Michael Parillo

EDUCATION

64 Teacher's Forum
Teaching Young Children
Time-Tested Advice for Getting Them Going at an Early Age
by Jeff Salem

66 Basics
Advanced Disco
Beyond Four on the Floor
by Rich Redmond

68 Strictly Technique
Nine Over Two
Part 2: Sticking Variations
by Bill Bachman

70 Rock 'n' Jazz Clinic
Groove Construction
Part 3: Linear Patterns
by Jost Nickel

72 Rock Perspectives
Progressive Drumming Essentials
Part 12: Double Bass Boot Camp
by Aaron Edgar

EQUIPMENT

22 Product Close-Up
Paiste 2002 Big Beat Cymbals
Dunnett Dreamtime Snare Drums
Bone Essence Series Drumset
Cymbomute Cymbal Dampeners
Innovative Percussion Legacy Series 9A Drumsticks and KDB-1 Bass Drum Beater

58 Gearing Up
The Winery Dogs' Mike Portnoy

76 Concepts
Organize Your Gear
Part 2: Riders
by Russ Miller

Win an Incredible Prize Package From Pearl Drums and V-Classic Cymbals!
Page 73

DEPARTMENTS

8 An Editor's Overview
Gear, More Gear, and Then Some!
by Billy Amendola

10 Readers' Platform

14 News

20 It's Questionable
Mind Matters: Mental Training Doesn't Work
by Bernie Schallehn

78 Showcase
Featuring Drum Market

82 In Memoriam
Santana's Raul Rekow and Earth, Wind & Fire's Maurice White

84 Critique
Daniel Freedman, Herlin Riley, Jaimeo Brown Transcendence, and more

88 Kit of the Month
Rocktopus

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AN EDITOR'S OVERVIEW

Gear, More Gear, and Then Some!

When I was a young drummer just starting out, I saw a clip of Buddy Rich playing a mind-blowing drum solo…on a folding chair. I can't quite remember what show it was on—maybe it was during one of Buddy's many appearances on *The Tonight Show* with Johnny Carson—but the one thing I *can* clearly remember is the huge impression it made on me, and the point he was making: It's not what equipment you play that matters, it's the music you play on it. Buddy came out, unfolded the chair, and blew everyone away with his skills. Point well taken!

Now, me personally, I've never been what you would call a "gearhead." Yes, of course I appreciate good-sounding drums and cymbals, but coming up it was always, *Let me tune up the kit and hit the drums and cymbals, and if I dig them, I'll use them.* For years I didn't take particular note of the number of plies or the type of wood the shells were made from, or if the hoops were die-cast or whatever. I always thought, *I'm playing the instrument, not making it.* I had faith that the drum, cymbal, and hardware manufacturers were all pretty much putting out quality gear. I got to know many of the people who worked at those companies, and I recognized the passion they put into their work.

As I got older and more into playing, I began to realize that, yes, it was true that when I did find a drum or cymbal I really liked, it would make me sound and play better. I started religiously reading former *Modern Drummer* product specialist Rick Van Horn's columns and reviews, and I learned all about what differentiated the new products from one another.

Today I'm in awe of where our current drum-product guru, Mike Dawson, and his team of experts have taken us in terms of understanding all the ins and outs of the latest equipment—especially when you consider how much more wide-ranging and sophisticated today's gear is. And trust me when I say that there is no shortage of new products coming out every month, which is proven by the ever-growing mountain of boxes in Mike's office and studio. And he, like Rick before him, takes much of this equipment into the clubs for a test drive as well. *MD*'s product reviews have always been honest and informative, and today, in almost every case, they're accompanied by online demonstration videos, bringing you that much closer to understanding how each piece of gear stacks up.

In the twenty years I've been at *MD*, I've seen small start-up companies become world leaders, and grand old companies expand their lines into exciting new areas. There are more great new products than ever before, which we hip you to in each new issue of the magazine (and we give away—be sure to enter our monthly contests, because you never know!). This month, however, we're highlighting a special selection of *the* most exciting gear that's available in 2016. Now, is there a piece of equipment out there that might be ideal for your particular needs but that's not necessarily covered here? That's entirely possible. What we're focusing on are the drums, cymbals, and accessories that we feel you should at the very least be aware of, and that we encourage you to check out in person at your local retail shop. We at *Modern Drummer* want you to buy what works best for you—because no one knows your particular needs more than you do. We just want to make sure you're aware of all the great choices you have.

Of course, this issue also features our usual insightful interviews, educational columns, and album reviews. So dig in, learn, and enjoy!

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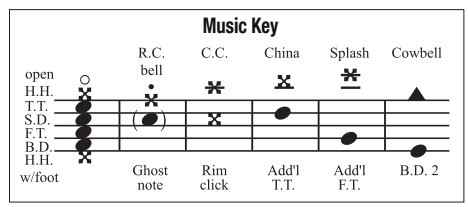

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Remo Belli

It's with great sadness that we announce the passing of Remo D. Belli, our beloved founder and leader. An innovator, pioneer, and icon of the world of percussion, he was an inspiration to us all for breaking new ground and making a difference in the world.

Remo was a visionary. In 1957, he invented the first successful synthetic drumhead and forever changed the sound of music in all genres. He committed himself and his company to providing drummers the world over with quality products and programs while striving to expand the acceptance of rhythm—and in particular drumming—as an integral component of an individual's well-being.

Through his ongoing efforts, professionals, enthusiasts, children, the elderly, those at risk, and those faced both with emotional and physical challenges have experienced the joy of drumming. We mourn his passing, and people in all walks of life will miss him. His spirit lives on, and we'll continue to pursue his vision of making drumming available to everyone. We will miss you. Rest in peace, Remo.

The Remo Family

Massive Metal

We've noticed a growing trend toward companies offering larger and larger cymbals, so we asked our Facebook and Instagram followers to weigh in on the practicality of oversized pies. Here are a few of their thoughts.

I think it all comes down to whatever type of music you play the most and what you enjoy playing as well. I have a Meinl Byzance 24", and I'm in love with it. I love the wash and the warm tone it brings to the rest of my kit. You'd probably also have to take into consideration the size of your drums. Playing a Bonham-sized setup is going to sound a bit more practical with larger cymbals rather than a bebop kit.

Austin Parson

Traveling with larger cymbals is an issue, but ergonomics and economy of motion become bigger issues. I really like the sound of larger cymbals but always feel like I need to remove a rack tom in order to bring things in close enough to make any sense for me ergonomically. Otherwise the bell on a 24" feels like it's in outer space to me.

Justin Vidal

I have a 23" Sabian OverRide. I wouldn't part with it for love or money. Its sound, feel, tones, and sustain are awesome. The bell causes people to rush for the fire exits. It's worth the hassle to lug that ten-pound cymbal around.

Don Taylor

I currently have nothing smaller than a 20" on my kit (except my hi-hats), and I'm in love with my big cymbals. I'm playing a Heartbeat 22" Classic Light ride, a 22" Studio Light ride (used as a crash), a 20" Studio crash, and 16" Studio/Classic hi-hats. I find that the larger cymbals sit better in a mix. The small ones tend to cut more, so if that's what you're going for—great!

Jesse Simon

I personally like a 20" or 21" ride of medium-heavy thickness for more of a clear, cutting sound and pronounced sticking. But if you like a nice wash and a wide range of sticking dynamics, then bigger, thinner rides are the way to go. They require a little more power to make them sing, but their range and attitude are nice.

Michael Trevino

Thinner 22" to 24" rides seem to be in the sweet spot for versatility across multiple genres. I don't play anything larger than 22", though, because it's hard finding a cymbal bag that will hold such beasts of cymbals.

Ben Aye

If you love the cymbal and it sounds like you, then lug it. If it's a cymbal that you feel is necessary to incorporate into your performances, then the size shouldn't matter. You'd probably end up carrying a cymbal that weighs just about as much anyway, so why not?

Ben Volk

Larger cymbals work well in lower-volume, more-relaxed music because you don't need to cut through with high-pitched and loud cymbals. As far as carrying around a big cymbal goes, let's face it—drums are already an extremely impractical instrument to transport. What's an extra 3" or 4" going to hurt?

James Coffin

I've always liked them. The ping is so nice. Burning swing was nearly effortless and much cleaner for me on a thick 22"-plus ride. Caution is needed to avoid accidentally shanking the cymbal anywhere other than the bell. If you do shank it, you have to be ready to commit to a super extended wash. Is it worth the bulk? Sure—if your kit doesn't move.

Carmen Bruno

Want your voice heard? Follow us on Facebook and Instagram, and look out for next month's question.

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Alex Markman

WE ARE SCIENTISTS' KEITH CARNE

"They'd sing a fill or a groove they wanted to hear, and my job was to basically interpret their booms and bops on the tubs." The busy New York drummer, educator, and journalist puts all his varied skills to the fresh and exciting songs of Keith Murray and Chris Cain's latest pop opus.

PRODUCT CLOSE-UP

Video demos of Bone's Essence series drumset, Dunnett's Dreamtime snare drums, and Paiste's 2002 Big Beat cymbals.

GROOVE CONSTRUCTION

In the third part of his current Rock 'n' Jazz Clinic series, Jost Nickel applies three simple rules to creating linear grooves.

FRUIT BATS' BRIAN KANTOR

"Practicing with a metronome is a godsend for all tempos. But for commanding a slow tempo, it's *invaluable*." Tips for simplicity and soul from the drummer in Eric D. Johnson's highly regarded band.

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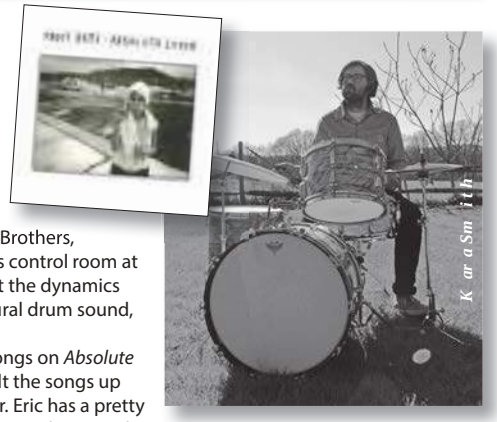
We Are Scientists
Helter Seltzer

While studying music and journalism at Rutgers University, **Keith Carne** came to an early and invaluable lesson in cross-disciplinary values. "A ton of elements factor into good writing," says Carne, who has worked as a contributing producer on WNYC's Peabody Award–winning *Leonard Lopate Show*. "But usually it's direct, focused, clear, and capable of knocking you on your ass at just the right times. Good writers know who they're writing for too, and when a reader gets a whiff that a writer is trying to do too much, it's usually a turn-off. I believe you can say the same thing about playing an instrument. And learning how to write a lede [the first sentence in a news story] was hugely beneficial to my learning how to comp behind a soloist—it made me ask myself, *What am I trying to say here?* or *What is the best way of setting the stage for someone else to say something?* In asking those sorts of questions, I cut out a lot of the fluff in my playing."

Carne's streamlined but attention-grabbing playing on We Are Scientists' latest album is a study in hook composition, and each of the ten songs benefits from his thoughtful yet emotion-filled approach. For Carne, who plays in a wide variety of New York ensembles, including his "passion project," the indie-rock band Brian Bond and the Communipaw, it all comes down to training. "My goal is to be able to play any style of music and do so with expression and restraint," the drummer says. "Financial reality in today's music marketplace demands it. I'm convinced 'formal' training in college is the reason I'm able to play a number of different styles well." (100% Records) **Adam Budofsky**

Fruit Bats
Absolute Loser



In 2011, when the group he was in at the time, Vetiver, did a month-long co-headlining tour with the equally well-regarded indie band Fruit Bats, drummer **Brian Kantor** formed a strong bond with Bats leader Eric D. Johnson (the Shins, Califone, *Our Idiot Brother* and *Smashed* scores). The two stayed in touch after the tour ended, and when Johnson got the gig to produce ex-Cardigans singer Nina Persson's 2014 LP, *Animal Heart*, he called Kantor in and subsequently used him on his solo record, *EDJ*. Now Kantor appears on the new album by a reconstituted Fruit Bats, *Absolute Loser,* which was recorded by Thom Monahan (Pernice Brothers, Chris Robinson Brotherhood) at his home studio in Los Angeles. "We tracked drums in Thom's control room at a rather subdued volume," Kantor says. "That's not to say I couldn't dig in when necessary, but the dynamics were more controlled. I appreciate this approach. I think you can end up with a far more natural drum sound, as fewer effects and less compression are needed to rein in the drums during mixing."

According to Kantor, Johnson came to the table with fleshed-out demos for many of the songs on *Absolute Loser*. "In some cases I tracked to those demos," Kantor explains, "and the rest of the band built the songs up around my takes. On the remainder of the songs Eric and I tracked guitar and drums together. Eric has a pretty firm grasp of drumming in general. He's the kind of guy who can literally play every instrument on his records, yet he still has the ability to release control and let his band members interpret in their own way. Occasionally we'll work off reference material, usually some great obscure '70s country rock grooves, trying to capture the essence of a particular feel or tuning." (Easy Sound) **Adam Budofsky**

For more with Keith Carne and Brian Kantor, go to moderndrummer.com.

More New Releases

Hendrik Meurkens Harmonicus Rex (Jimmy Cobb) /// **Todd Coolman and Trifecta** Collectables (Dennis Mackrel) /// **Vinnie Zummo** The Coyote (Todd Sucherman, Ray Marchica, Vinnie Zummo, Matty Amendola) /// **Pierce the Veil** Misadventures (Mike Fuentes) /// **Cyndi Lauper** Detour (Chad Cromwell, Greg Morrow) /// **Peter Bernstein** Let Loose (Bill Stewart) /// **Grateful Dead** July 1978: The Complete Recordings (Bill Kreutzmann, Mickey Hart) /// **The Jelly Jam** Profit (Rod Morgenstein) /// **Ace Frehley** Origins Vol. 1 (Matt Starr)

Jared Champion With Cage the Elephant

Jared Champion's backbeat-infused, no-frills grooves propel the alternative chart-crushers Cage the Elephant on their current tour, with a drumming approach partly inspired by the likes of Mitch Mitchell, Nick Mason, and John Bonham. "Bonham taught me to play with energy and really go for it at times," Champion says. "He was a breed of drummer that is really rare these days. He was a true rock star and brought a lot of attention to drummers. I feel like the persona of the superstar drummer has diminished over the years—guys like Bonham and Keith Moon. There are not as many superstar drummers as there used to be. With the expansion of technology in music, the need for drummers has been reduced."

Ten years into Cage the Elephant's career, Champion offers advice for aspiring players. "Just practice constantly—every single day," he says. "If this is what you want, then engulf your entire being in it. Don't be a waiter that plays music and has a band. Be a musician that happens to wait tables until you can afford to support yourself playing music. You can't half-ass this shit—it's all or nothing." **Willie Rose**

For more with Jared Champion, go to moderndrummer.com.

Poonehgham a

On Tour

Mike Inns

Carl Palmer is out with ELP Legacy for a tour that's dedicated to the memory of the late Emerson, Lake & Palmer keyboardist Keith Emerson, who passed away in March.

Bruce Pilato

Palmer and Emerson

Also on the Road **Chad Smith** with Red Hot Chili Peppers /// **Carter Beauford** with the Dave Matthews Band /// **Bill Kreutzmann** and **Mickey Hart** with Dead & Company /// **Michael Calabrese** with Lake Street Dive /// **Patrick Hallahan** with Ray LaMontagne /// **Julian Dorio** with Eagles of Death Metal /// **Dan Molad** with Lucius

Industry Happenings

Society for American Music Honors Terri Lyne Carrington

Three-time Grammy-winning recording artist **Terri Lyne Carrington** was recognized as this year's honorary member at the forty-second annual conference of the Society for American Music, during a public ceremony at the Hyatt Regency in Cambridge, Massachusetts. "I had a great time being 'roasted' by Larry Simpson at the honoree reception and dinner," Carrington says. "It was a pleasure and an honor to be there with old and new friends, as well as family." Carrington's contributions to American music conferred a lifelong membership to the society. She joins a distinguished group of luminaries, including Pharoah Sanders, Loretta Lynn, Oscar Peterson, Max Roach, Gunther Schuller, and John Cage.

Michael Broyles

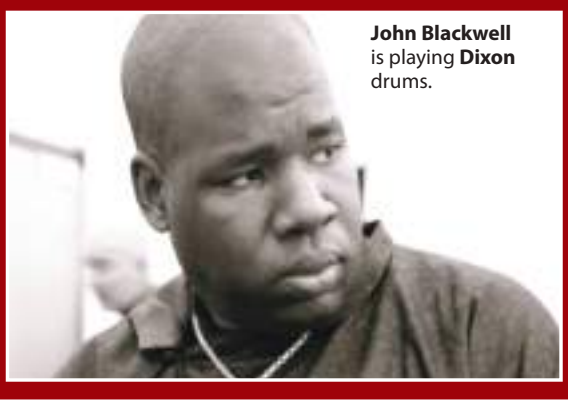
Left to right: Charles Garrett, president of the Society for American Music; honoree Terri Lyne Carrington; Roger Brown, president of Berklee College of Music; and Larry Simpson, provost of Berklee College of Music

Who's Playing What

Shawn Hinchy

Jay Weinberg (Slipknot) is using **Evans** drumheads.

Steve Barney (Anastacia, left) and **Conor Meehan** (Honeyhoney) are using **Natal** drums.



John Blackwell is playing **Dixon** drums.

Scott Hall

Paul Wandtke (Trivium) has joined the **Tama** artist roster.

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CATCHING UP WITH…

Simon Phillips

Life after Toto is no walk in the park for this drummer—it's more like an all-out sprint, with plenty of deep grooves and technical wiar dry to go around.

With the release of *Spark*, Japanese keyboard phenom Hiromi once again proves that while material is important, it still takes just the right sidemen to bring a composition to life. Now three studio albums in, Hiromi's Trio Project is firing on all cylinders, with bass legend Anthony Jackson lending brilliant contrapuntal support to the music, while the drumming provides color and intensity thanks to amazing performances by Simon Phillips.

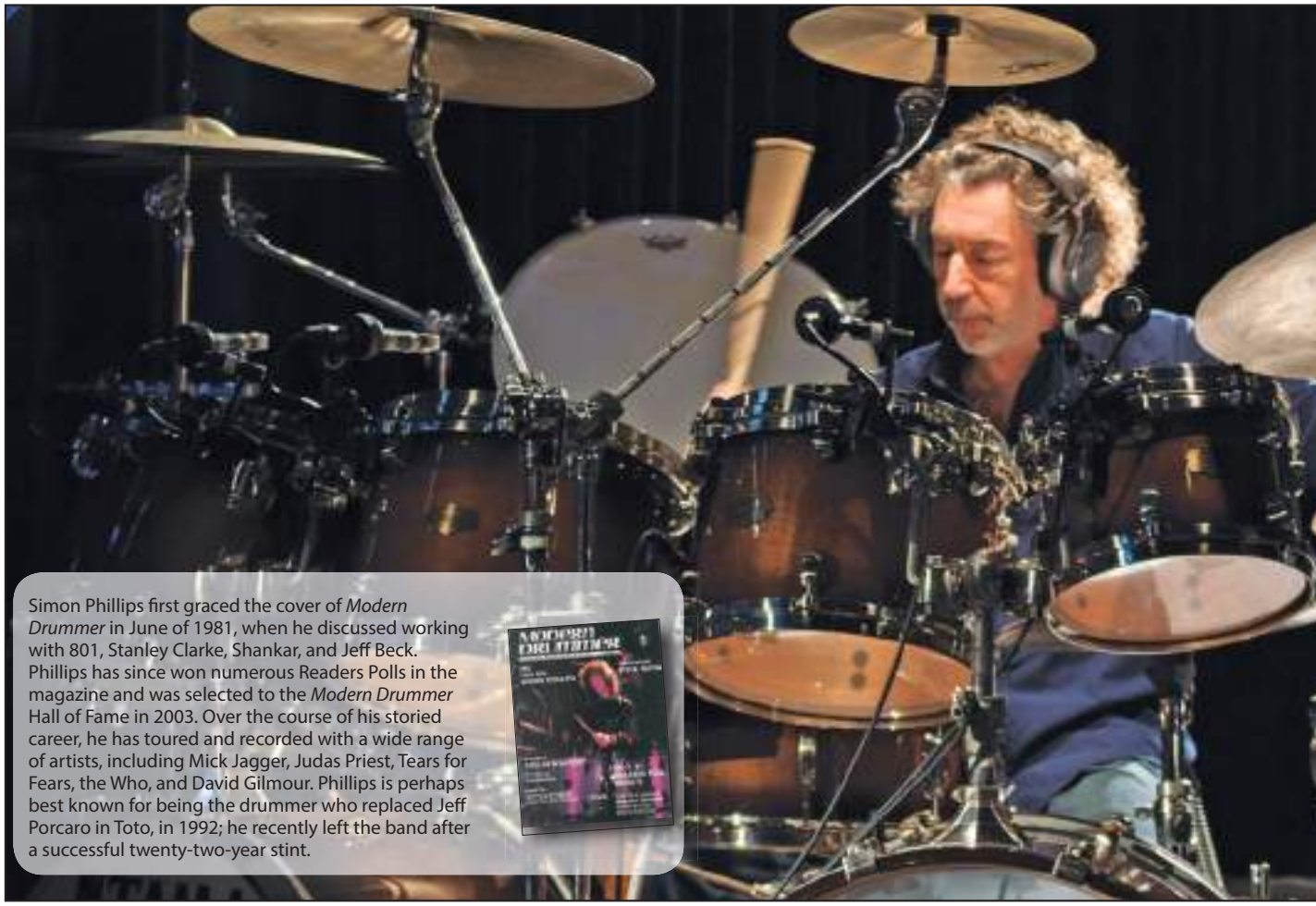
Spark is full of dense, odd-time fusion madness. But it also has moments of spacious funk and intimate delicacy, and no one seems more qualified to handle such a roller coaster than Phillips, who imposes on the music with plenty of notes and waves of polyrhythmic drama. But he also knows when to let Hiromi shine, with her unique virtuosity and sense of swing.

How does one prepare to tackle such tough compositions? "To me there has to be a story, an approach, a concept," Phillips says. "I'm an instinctive player, so I will play what I feel might put a fairly complex line into what I consider to be the best situation, whether I play it exactly as written or play a counterpart. *What if I put six against this? Is this going to be cool to listen to? Am I overstaying my welcome? Am I playing the right thing for this song?* I look at it from a listener's point of view. It still has to tap your feet."

As if the Hiromi gig is not demanding enough, Phillips still regularly records and tours with his own blazing fusion group, Protocol, which released *Protocol III* last year. "Both projects are tough on everybody," Phillips says. "We don't have six weeks to make these records, we have six days. I push the Protocol guys on some of those odd meters, and it's quite a lot to learn and adapt. But we capture some great music."

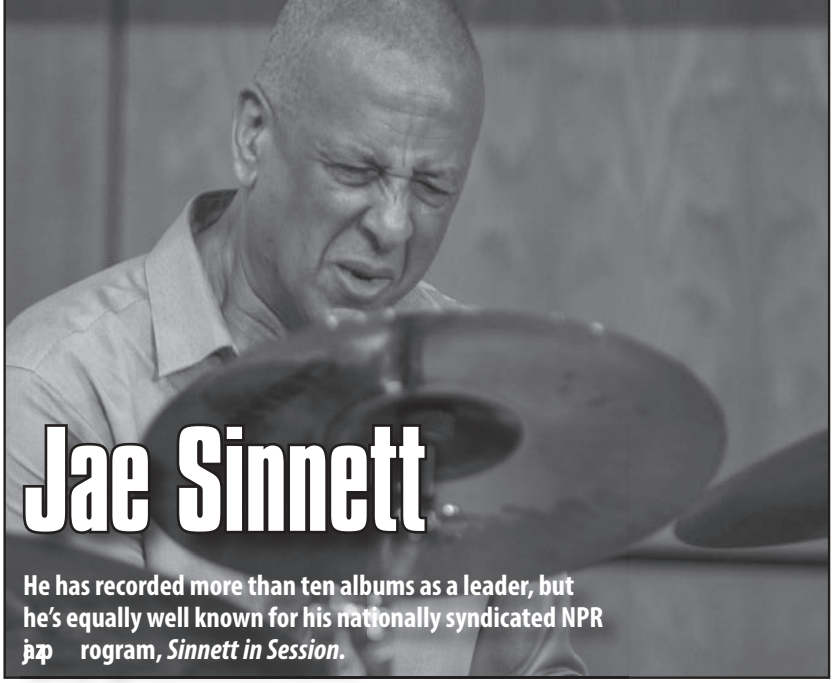
And while the drummer's studio and stage work still demonstrates that chops will always be the rage, as a producer Phillips sees alarming trends among today's young lions. "In the drumming world, everything's very technical," he explains. "It seems to wow a lot of people. But getting someone into a studio to lay down a simple track that should be one or two takes, it'll take forever. Their consistency with a backbeat is not steady. Their groove keeps changing, and the end of a song sounds different from the beginning.

"Like with sports," Phillips continues,



Simon Phillips first graced the cover of *Modern Drummer* in June of 1981, when he discussed working with 801, Stanley Clarke, Shankar, and Jeff Beck. Phillips has since won numerous Readers Polls in the magazine and was selected to the *Modern Drummer* Hall of Fame in 2003. Over the course of his storied career, he has toured and recorded with a wide range of artists, including Mick Jagger, Judas Priest, Tears for Fears, the Who, and David Gilmour. Phillips is perhaps best known for being the drummer who replaced Jeff Porcaro in Toto, in 1992; he recently left the band after a successful twenty-two-year stint.

"people are faster now and do more physically than they could twenty years ago. All the records are being broken. But music is not a sport. It's a lesson to be learned from one of the best drummers of our time, and one of the best musicians, Steve Gadd. He just lays it down. Simple, to the point, no messing, no fuss, just beautifully executed, and it makes everybody feel great. My playing is more explosive, and there's nothing wrong with great, young, explosive players. But in the real world, they won't be asked to play drum solos, they'll be asked to play a song. And the biggest compliment you can pay me is not that I'm a great drummer but that I'm a great musician." **Ilya Stemkovsky**



Jae Sinnett

He has recorded more than ten albums as a leader, but he's equally well known for his nationally syndicated NPR jazz program, *Sinnett in Session*.

Jae Sinnett's drumming style is visceral and streamlined—think Jimmy Cobb, Billy Higgins, Joe Farnsworth. The resident of Norfolk, Virginia, has worked in funk and pop situations, but his first love is classic jazz, as heard on such albums as *It's Telling…a Drummer's Perspective*, *Subject to Change*, and *The Sinnett Hearings*. Sinnett typically surrounds himself with first-rate accompaniment, with past albums including ringers like alto saxophonist Steve Wilson and trumpeter Wallace Roney. Sinnett's latest release, *Zero to 60*, features saxophonist Ralph Bowen, pianist Allen Farnham, and bassist Hans Glawischnig.

Though he's had success as both a musician and broadcaster—he composes all the music he performs and records—Sinnett cites 2005's *The Sinnett Hearings* as perhaps his most important release, both personally and commercially. "The music was prompted by a scary hospital visit," Jae recalls. "That's why the first song is called 'Palpitations.' Seven days of being in the hospital produced 'Bedrock.' That album was a real turning point for me in how I was able to merge rhythm with melody and harmony. And it was my first record to debut at number one on the national *JazzWeek* radio charts."

As *MD* is a chronicle of all things drums, *It's Telling…a Drummer's Perspective* piqued our curiosity. "That's the first record where I wrote from rhythm to melody," Sinnett says. "Most composers have a theme in their melody first, then down to rhythm. I wanted to write music specifically from drumming concepts. I created a series of rhythmic layers or beats, then worked through them as though I was playing a composition. I played the beat for a certain number of bars, which would lead to the next section, similar to a verse or chorus. I'd shift and alter the rhythm, but there was still continuity. I worked through entire form structures with these rhythms. Then I overdubbed the other parts."

Sinnett extends his musicality-within-drumming approach to his teaching practice. "Instead of patterns, beats, and licks, I teach concepts," he says. "I want my students to understand *why* a particular drummer plays what he plays. One thing I will do is ask the student to hum a bass part, in time. Then I'll ask the student to create the drum part to go with the bass line. That forces drummers to think about harmony and sound resolution, and it enables them to understand form and hear how chords resolve. They can see the bigger picture."

Though Sinnett's busy schedule includes performing with his trio, teaching, broadcasting *Sinnett in Session*, and even producing a cooking show, his success started with a setback. A star drummer in high school, he failed the audition for the U.S. Navy Band because he couldn't sight-read. "The instructor laughed at me and kicked me out," Sinnett recalls. "My friends in high school told me I was such a great drummer, and that went to my head. I thought I could whiz through any audition. But the instructor thoroughly demoralized me. I left the room crying. That was the catalyst to get my act together. The feeling of how the instructor talked to me, it touched a nerve and made me angry at myself. Afterwards I thought to myself, *That will never happen again.* And it didn't.

"I see that happening today with some of the kids I teach," Sinnett adds. "Mom and Dad tell their young musician kids how great they are, and the kids believe it. I tell kids out of the gate, 'If your time is sad, I will tell you.' It's good to be positive, but being positive isn't always being realistic." **Ken Micallef**

Mind Matters
Mental Training Doesn't Work

by Bernie Schallehn

My stage fright is so bad that I'm surprised my bandmates keep me on the kit. I've tried visualization, positive affirmations, and other techniques that you've written about in this column and in your book, but they don't work for me. I love drumming, but the anxiety I feel and that little voice inside my head that says I'm a lousy drummer ruins my gigs. Do you have any advice you could offer me?
S.B.

I'm sorry you're suffering. Making music should be a joyful experience, so let's troubleshoot.

Visualization can be performed in an associated or dissociated fashion. Associated visualization is the stronger and more powerful of the two methods. To practice that approach, close your eyes and visualize playing at your peak performance in a manner that makes it feel like you're actually there. Bring in as many senses as you can. Imagine looking out over your kit into the audience. Hear the sounds of the crowd, the clinking glassware from the bar, and your bandmates tuning their guitars. Feel your drum throne supporting you, your feet on the pedals, and your hands holding your sticks. (Tip: Hold a pair of your sticks while visualizing.) You should also imagine the smells in the venue, which could be the aroma of food, beer, or the fog machine. If you record a video of yourself while you're visualizing, the playback should show fine muscle movements in your hands, which is proof that your mind is experiencing the visualization as a real experience.

Dissociated visualization is a technique in which you're essentially watching yourself perform from the audience's perspective, like on a mental TV or movie screen. This approach is more detached, so it weakens the ability of your mind to perceive the experience as real. Dissociated visualization also tends to use only the sense of sight. Think of this approach as if you're looking at a picture of a red Ferrari as opposed to imagining yourself actually sitting behind the wheel.

Rather than give up on using visualizations to alleviate your anxiety, try the associated approach and see if that makes a difference.

In my clinical experience working with athletes, actors, musicians, and others who perform for an audience, I found that most tend to word their positive affirmations negatively, such as "I won't get nervous before a gig," "I won't freak out if I blow a fill," or "I won't beat myself up if I rush a song." When you word things in this way, the mind hears "Get nervous before a gig," "Freak out if I blow a fill," and "Beat yourself up if you rush a song." As a child, you heard "won't" and "don't" so many times that they essentially became "non-words." When a parent says to a young child, "Don't spill your milk," what happens? Inevitably the kid tips over his glass. The mind hears the instruction, "Spill your milk," and then the kid's brain visualizes a glass of spilled milk. To achieve the desired outcome, the parent should've used a simple, positive instruction, such as "Hold your glass up straight and tall."

Now think about how you've been wording your affirmations. If they're negative, you'll need to revamp your strategy. Try saying things like "I look forward to performing before an audience," "Any sensation I feel in my body is excitement," "Should I flub a fill, I'll just keep drumming," or "If I feel myself speeding up, I'll just reel myself in."

How do you perceive your audiences? Are they a pack of judgmental jerks who are waiting for the band to make a mistake so they can snicker and point fingers? Or are they a group of fellow human beings wanting to be entertained and be a part of a shared experience with the band? Performing is a positive challenge, not a negative threat.

There's also a newer wave in cognitive-behavioral therapy called ACT (acceptance and commitment therapy). The originators of this approach, psychologist Steven C. Hayes and his colleagues, base ACT on mindfulness (a state of awareness and openness) and values, and they appear to have some impressive outcome-based research to back up their beliefs. Hayes' techniques are said to help the individual deal with painful thoughts and feelings and lead a rich and meaningful life.

Keep in mind that the ACT techniques aren't designed to eradicate the thoughts and feelings that are causing you to suffer. Russ Harris, a follower of the movement, says in his book *The Illustrated Happiness Trap* that it's impossible to get rid of negative feelings or control what you think, and that affirmations and visualizations will only work in the short term. He also believes that relaxation techniques might work if you've had a stressful day, but they aren't effective for easing intense emotions that border on terror, such as stage fright. If the techniques you've been using aren't working, then I suggest trying some of Hayes' approaches from the book *Get Out of Your Mind and Into Your Life*.

Good luck!

Bernie Schallehn holds a master's degree in counseling psychology and, while in private practice, held the credentials of a certified clinical mental health counselor and a certified alcohol and substance abuse counselor.

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Paiste

2002 Big Beat Cymbals

Thinner, warmer, and more complex sounding than their classic-rock counterparts.

Paiste's first B8 bronze cymbal line, the lightweight and bright-sounding Giant Beat, was launched in 1967, which was right at the time when British rock was beginning to dominate the airways. Many of the genre's drummers used those cymbals, including Led Zeppelin's John Bonham. But as the bands became more successful and began playing to bigger crowds in larger venues, the stage volume eventually surpassed the point where the Giant Beats could keep up. Paiste's answer was to develop a sturdier line, called 2002, which debuted in 1971. The 2002 series has since become a top choice for drummers playing all types of rock, punk, blues, modern country, metal, and more.

To round out its professional-grade B8 bronze offerings, Paiste developed a new subseries, called Big Beat, which provides the soft, buttery feel of the Giant Beats and the precise, powerful tones of the 2002, with additional complexity and warmth created by a semi-matte finish and a new traditional-style hammering pattern. These cymbals are said to be ideal for soft to loud playing—either live or in the studio—in classic rock, indie-rock, blues, country, R&B, and soul. Big Beats are available in limited sizes, which include 15" and 16" hi-hats and 18", 19", 20", 21", 22", and 24" crash-rides.

15" and 16" Hi-Hats

I like to use larger hi-hats whenever possible; the wider wash and lower pitch usually sit better in the mix, and I like having the larger surface to strike. The problem with some 15" and 16" hi-hats, however, is that they're often too heavy and clunky, or they sound overly dark, mushy, and undefined. The 15" and 16" 2002 Big Beats sit right in that sweet spot where you can get plenty of clarity and articulation from them, but they're also super-expressive and open up very nicely to provide a luscious wash.

I've owned a pair of 15" Giant Beats for over a decade, and while they're perfect for whenever I want to elicit that soft-yet-bright hi-hat sound heard in '60s-era rock, they don't have enough low end or rich overtones to make them applicable to most other genres. The Big Beats, however, have all the complexity and expressiveness you'd need to dig deep into the nuances for a delicate acoustic jazz gig, while also being able to roar like a lion in more bombastic playing styles. The 16" hi-hats are equally as impressive, albeit at an expectedly lower pitch.

Crash-Rides

All of the 2002 Big Beat crash-rides provide amazingly smooth, rich tones with a great balance of bright, brilliant attack and warm, deep sustain. The 18" has a near-perfect clean, fast crash sound, while the 19" has a touch more complexity.

The 20" and 21" Big Beats can serve double-duty as light rides and washy crashes, with the 20" favoring crash-riding while the 21" has better articulation and a deeper and more dramatic crash.

The 22" Big Beat has the most traditional jazz ride sound and a slower, more gong-like crash. The 24" has the lowest pitch, most controlled wash, and clearest stick articulation, and it produces a big, roaring crash. All of the bells on the Big Beat crash-rides have very musical tones and are well-integrated within the overall cymbal sound, so striking them brings out a nice bed of overtones in addition to the chime of the cup.

The 2002 Big Beat series is a stellar addition to Paiste's high-end B8 lineup. While they remain true to the clean, precise, clear sound that the 2002 series is known for, the new manufacturing techniques used to create the Big Beats introduce some of the complexity and richness that taste-making drummers covet in vintage cymbals, minus the fragility and muddy overtones.

Michael Dawson

TECH SPECS

Alloy: CuSn8 bronze
Sizes: 15" and 16" hi-hats, 18"–22" and 24" crash-rides
Weight: medium-thin

For video demos of these cymbals, visit moderndrummer.com.

Dunnett
Dreamtime Snare Drums

Creamy, smooth tones crafted from premium Australian timbers.

One of the standout products launched at this past Winter NAMM was a collaboration between notable Queensland builder Paul Warry of Metro Drums and Vancouver-based master craftsman Ronn Dunnett of Dunnett Classic/George Way Drums to build top-shelf snares from some of the finest tone woods in Australia. Warry is making the shells, which are ply-constructed to Dunnett's specs, and Ronn is finishing the drums with his wide snare beds, precisely cut bearing edges, innovative hardware, and a specific choice of drumheads meant to optimize each drum's sound and performance. This new line is called Dreamtime, and we were sent two models for review: a 5.5x14 Queensland walnut and a 7x14 blackwood.

5.5x14 Queensland Walnut

Everyone who played this drum at NAMM wanted to take it home; it sounded *so* good. Dunnett/Way endorser Carter McLean even referenced this snare when designing his own signature model. The shell is made from Queensland walnut, which is harder than North American black walnut. The Queensland variety has a Janka hardness rating of 1,670 lbf, while black walnut is 1,010 lbf.

The Queensland walnut drum came with a Remo Coated Ambassador batter and Dunnett's Crystal bottom. It had forty-two-strand wires, eight tube lugs, an R4 throw-off, and Dunnett's new 2.3 mm Double Edge/Double Flange steel hoops, which are a revived design that was originally introduced by George Way in the 1950s. These hoops have a rounded top edge to provide a stronger attack and to cause less stick damage. They are also stiffer than standard triple-flange hoops, so they won't bend out of shape after heavy use. These hoops aren't as blunt sounding and shocking to strike as die-cast hoops, but they produced a strong, focused rim-shot "pop."

The tuning range of the 5.5x14 Queensland walnut snare is very wide, extending all the way from Steve Jordan–style tabletop tight down to the point where the tension rods were barely holding

Blackwood

tension. Medium-tight produced the most well balanced sound that combined a snappy stick crack with some super-smooth, rich overtones. The lower we tuned it, the creamier the tone became and the doughier the drumhead felt. The overtones remained balanced and even at any tuning, and the fundamental pitch was pure and tuneful. You may need to dampen the batter head a touch to keep the sustain from lingering beyond the next backbeat, but it's good to know there's so much sound to work with in the first place. Snare sensitivity was extreme at all tunings and dynamics.

7x14 Blackwood

This drum has eight tube lugs, forty-two-strand wires, an R4 throw-off, and a Crystal bottom head, but Dunnett opted for a slightly heavier Remo Coated Ambassador X batter head, and he chose to use his CR straight hoops with clips. The shell is made from 10-ply blackwood, which is a premium Australian tone wood that's softer than Queensland walnut but a few steps harder than North American black walnut (Janka rating: 1,160 lbf).

This bigger drum, outfitted with straight hoops, is tailor-made for low and powerful rock 'n' roll tones. Its 7" depth provided plenty of headroom for high-volume playing, while the blackwood shell produced a huge, balanced, and musical voice. You can tune this drum way up for a bright metallic-type tone, you can set it in the middle of its range for a balanced, open sound with rich, clean overtones and cracking attack, or you can explore its lower register for several different variations of deep, mix-ready, gushy punch. Again, the overtones were very balanced and even, so no muffling was required. But a touch of tape or gel would go a long way to tighten up the sustain for optimal impact. Five stars all around!
Michael Dawson

TECH SPECS

Shells: 7x14 blackwood and 5.5x14 Queensland walnut
Hardware: eight tube lugs, single-flange CR (7x14) and 2.3 mm Double D (5.5x14) steel hoops, R4 swiveling throw-offs, and adjustable Hypervents
Heads: Remo Ambassador and Ambassador X batters and Dunnett Crystal bottoms
Wires: 42-strand

Check out these drums at moderndrummer.com.

Bone
Essence Series Drumset
Custom-shop quality at a more manageable price.

Bone Custom has been handcrafting drums in Slovenia since 2005. This year it launched the Essence series, which is designed to be more affordable without sacrificing the high-end quality and bold look that Bone employs on its custom-shop kits.

Our review kit's shells are maple (9-ply kick and 7-ply toms) and it came in contemporary sizes: 7x10 and 8x12 rack toms, a 16x16 floor tom, and an 18x22 bass drum. The outer veneer is a natural-finish bird's-eye maple that features cool dark spots and stripes in the grain.

The hardware includes chrome beavertail lugs, 2.3 mm triple-flange steel hoops, heavy-duty spurs and floor tom legs, die-cast bass drum claws with rubber gaskets, and chunky 1.25" black-coated-aluminum air vents. The toms are suspended on Gauger RIMS mounts, and the bass drum has an extra-deep front hoop.

The drums are outfitted with Evans-made/Bone-branded drumheads. The toms have clear 2-ply batters and clear single-ply bottoms. The bass drum has an EQ3-type batter (2-ply with removable muffling ring) and a single-ply coated front with a 6" port and plastic porthole protector.

The bearing edges are shaped very precisely and feature a slight round-over back cut so that more drumhead makes contact with the shell for a bigger, fatter tone. The drums tuned up very easily, and

TECH SPECS

Shells: maple with bird's-eye maple veneer
Sizes: 7x10, 8x12, 16x16 toms, and 18x22 bass drum
Heads: Evans Clear G2 tom batters and G1 bottoms, Clear EQ3 kick batter and coated single-ply front with 6" port
Price: $2,980

they sounded most at home when tensioned just above the wrinkle point. That setting produced big, powerful, contemporary-sounding tom tones with sizeable yet controllable sustain and punchy attack. Bone also offers its own stick-on muffling pads, called Candy, which are 1" circles. It wasn't necessary to dampen the toms to tame overtones, but one pad applied to the batter side was all that was needed to make them more focused and record-ready.

The 18x22 kick also preferred lower tunings. With both heads just above the wrinkle point, and without additional muffling, the bass drum produced a chest-thumping punch with a snappy attack and nice, rumbling sustain. Again, a little dampening goes a long way, so it only took tossing a towel or an Evans EQ pad inside the drum to shorten the sustain and get a tighter tone. One word of caution: the extra-wide front hoop makes the already-deep kick a bit larger than some standard-size cases will accommodate. But from a purely sonic- and craftsmanship-perspective, Bone has made no compromises with the Essence series.

Michael Dawson

For a video demo of these drums, visit moderndrummer.com.

Cymbomute
Cymbal Dampeners

Rubber rings to control volume without destroying feel.

Many drummers struggle to figure out how to practice quietly. Whether we live in an apartment complex or in a house with young children, we don't always have the opportunity to practice at normal volume. Sometimes the only option is to practice on rubber pads, which can wreak havoc on your wrists if you're not using proper technique, and they can limit your creativity.

UK-based company Cymbomute aims to make the process of practicing on cymbals at low volume easier, cleaner, and quieter. We received a full set of mutes for review, which accommodated everything from 14" hi-hats to a 22" ride. The mutes fit over the edge of the cymbal and are held in place by their own tension. Each mute has enough flex to fit two cymbal sizes, thus making them more versatile.

The Cymbomute requires a little finagling to put on a cymbal for the first time. But once it's on, it stays in place. I found that folding the mute to create a crease in the center helped make the installation process easier. The mute didn't move regardless of how hard I hit the cymbal.

Cymbomute's latest product, the Wide Ride, is made with 100 mm material instead of the standard 50 mm. This model is meant to give greater volume reduction on 18"–24" cymbals without changing the feel. I found very little difference in stick rebound on the ride cymbal with or without the mute installed.

Cymbomutes are well made, and if used with care (do not use splintered sticks), they can be kept on cymbals indefinitely without tearing or fraying. A set of three Cymbomutes (14" or 15" hi-hats, 16" or 17" crash, and 20" or 21" ride) sells for under $40, and a four-piece pack is available for $49.99. Check them out at cymbomute.com.
Nick Amoroso

TECH SPECS
Material: 50-mm and 100-mm rubber rings
Sizes: 14"–22"
Price: four-piece set for $49.99

Innovative Percussion
Legacy Series 9A Drumsticks and KDB-1 Bass Drum Beater

An all-purpose stick with a small barrel tip and a yarn-covered beater for beefier bottom end.

Innovative Percussion, one of the leading manufacturers of professional-grade percussion mallets, beaters, and drumsticks, recently added two products to its catalog that are poised to become go-to choices for many drummers, regardless of playing style or musical genre.

First up is the Legacy series 9A drumstick. This model is made from hickory and measures 16" long and .580" in diameter. It features a small barrel bead, which helps increase cymbal articulation. Width-wise, the .580" Legacy 9A falls between a 5A (.565") and a 5B (.595"), and it is the same diameter as the company's teardrop-tip Legacy 5AB. The 9A is .125" shorter than the others, but I didn't notice any decreased reach when testing it. I often toggled between 5A and 5B sticks depending on how loud or quiet I needed to play, but the 9A was able to cover all situations, from super-soft background gigs to full-on rock shows. The small barrel tip is excellent for keeping cymbal wash under control at quieter dynamics, while the thicker neck provided big, full crashes and sloshy open hi-hats. The 9A sticks held up very well after several weeks of regular use, which is a testament to Innovative Percussion's quality control. If you play in a lot of different genres and at various dynamic levels, the Legacy 9A could be your perfect match.

The KDB-1 bass drum beater has an innovative new design that borrows from IP's expertise in keyboard mallet manufacturing. It features a wood core wrapped in yarn, so it looks like a short marimba mallet. The wood core helps provide solid attack, while the yarn softens the high-end frequencies a bit so that the low-end can come across stronger.

The KDB-1 was developed along with Nashville session great Chris McHugh. In a video interview posted on IP's website, McHugh says, "It was important to have something that would work across a wide variety of kick drum approaches. Often with beaters you get a lot of attack and volume, but the lower part of the note is shy. You can use a beater with a lot of material on it and get some of that low end, but then you'll lose punch." In a follow-up email, Chris stated, "I have never found a beater that efficiently produced the lowest pitch and had the perfect balance of impact, attack, and tone until the KDB-1."

The KDB-1 is designed to offer a consistent, balanced bass drum sound that combines attack and low-end at all volumes, and our testing proved that to be exactly the case. It produced the same clean front-end smack that you get from a traditional felt beater, while also eliciting some strong, deep low-end. The increased low-end response was reminiscent of the fluffy tone of a fleece-covered vintage-style beater, but the KDB-1 sounded more focused and balanced. And it had more power. If you're looking to maximize your bass drum sound, start here.

Michael Dawson

TECH SPECS
Size: Legacy 9A: .580"x16"
Price: Legacy 9A: $15.25; KDB-1: $39

GEAR OF

The time has come when many of the new products that were introduced at the Winter NAMM convention in January are finally making their way to the shelves of drum shops around the world. While we can't possibly highlight every piece of gear that's available, we've cherry-picked as many of our favorites that could be crammed into a dozen pages. Enjoy!

The **ALESIS SamplePad 4** has two square pads and two thin bar pads, plus a dual-zone trigger input, for an ultra-compact way to add custom or built-in loops and samples to your setup.

AHEAD added a backrest to its popular **Spinal-G** throne, which has a channel to eliminate tailbone compression, and there are more beater options available for the unique **Switch Kick** quick-release bass drum beater system, such as a leather-covered brush.

BOSPHORUS is commemorating two decades in business with the '60s-inspired, thin, patina-finish **20th Anniversary series**.

THE YEAR

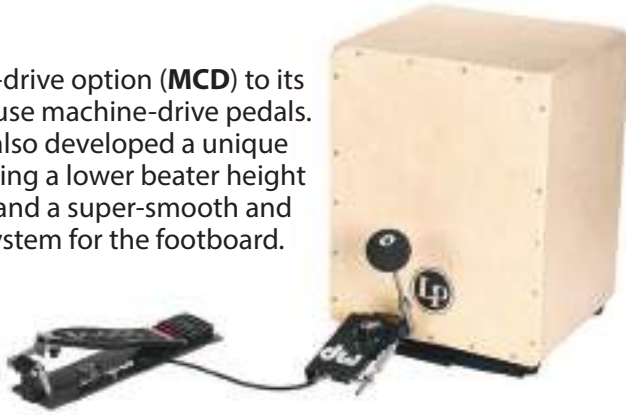
WANT TO SEE MORE?
Check out the dozens of NAMM booth tour videos we've posted to our YouTube channel, scroll back through our Instagram feed for additional product photos, and be sure visit the companies' websites.

DDRUM is going after the indie-rock drummer with the four-piece **Reflex Rally Sport** kit, which features a crème-striped satin finish, alder shells, and the classic 12", 16", 22" configuration with a matching 5.5x14 snare.

DIXON is employing a compression spring and large adjustment knob in its new **Precision Coil** pedals for smoother action and simpler function.

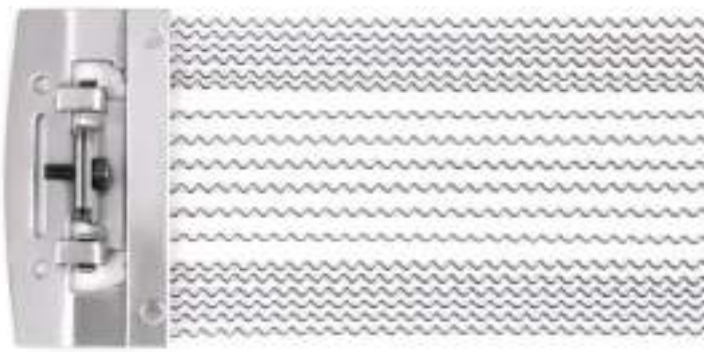
To provide greater sound options, **DREAM** is offering a package of three hi-hat cymbals (a lightweight Bliss, a medium-weight Contact, and a heavyweight Energy) called **TriHat**, and **14"–19" Bliss paper-thin crashes** are now available.

DW added a chain-drive option (**MCD**) to its high-end, easy-to-use machine-drive pedals. The company has also developed a unique **cajon pedal** featuring a lower beater height for optimal sound and a super-smooth and responsive roller system for the footboard.



EVANS has developed old-school-style drumheads, called **Evans '56**, which are designed to replicate the sound, look, and feel of calfskin.

The **FAT CAT** snare wire system, which features an independently adjustable center section, is now available in **narrower six/eight/six** and **six/six/six configurations**.



The simply designed **GIBRALTAR Stealth G Drive** pedal has the hoop clamp positioned on top of the frame for easier access. The spring-loaded **Flex clamp** doesn't collapse when opened, and the **Beat EFX** attachments allow for the addition of shaker, jingle, and finger-cymbal sounds to any bass drum beater.

The **GON BOPS Daniel de los Reyes signature cajon** is designed to deliver the rootsy-sounding tones Reyes requires with hit-making country group the Zach Brown Band.

GRETSCH pretty much redefined the market for affordable bebop kits with its hugely popular **Catalina Club Jazz**. The $699 kits are available in lacquer finishes and the bearing edges are now modeled after the shape of those on USA Custom drums from the 1980s.

ISTANBUL AGOP added a heavyweight Power pre-pack with case to its popular **Xist** line. The company has also introduced **Joey Waronker signature hi-hats** and added to the thin, vintage-style **Signature** line with a huge **26" ride**.

ISTANBUL MEHMET is paying tribute to legendary cymbal maker Kirkor Kucokyan with the dark, dry **Kirkor** signature ride. It's also added the similarly dark and warm-sounding **Sahra** model.

The five-piece, four-cymbal **KAT KT4** electronic drumkit comes with unique samples of Gretsch and DW drums, Sabian cymbals, and LP instruments.

LP is celebrating the life and career of Santana's **Raul Rekow** with **signature congas and bongos**. In the accessory department, there are some cool **Raw magnetic sound enhancers** that can affix to any steel hoop to add snare, jingle, or castanet textures.

LUDWIG has reinvented the classic **Club Date** kit, which features 7-ply maple/poplar/maple shells with rounded edges, and is now building these drums in its Monroe, North Carolina, factory.

A Slew of Snares

CANOPUS Alphonse Mouzon 9-ply birch/2-ply wenge and thirtieth-anniversary solid-shell Zelkova with gold-infused finish

DW Black Iron (made by Greg Keplinger)

DUNNETT 2N high-carbon steel with battleship gray finish

JOYFUL NOISE tenth-anniversary seamless brass TKO

GRETSCH Copper and Bronze USA Customs

LUDWIG Hammered Acrolite and Copperphonic with tube lugs

MASTERS OF MAPLE Type-M hybrid with a metal core in a 6-ply wood shell

PEACE 5.5x14 hammered copper with die-cast hoops

PEARL Dennis Chambers twelve-over-eight-lug cast-aluminum

PORK PIE Pig Iron with satin finish

RBH 8x15 baritone 3-ply Monarch with gumwood veneer

SAKAE stave Cypress

SONOR One of a Kind series 5.5x14 18-ply Poisonwood-over-maple

TAMA mid-priced Soundworks series in steel, maple, and kapur

YAMAHA steel, aluminum, and brass Recording Customs with beaded shell

MAPEX drumkits are now available with **NFUZD Nspire hybrid packages** so you can incorporate electronic sounds within an acoustic setup for ultimate flexibility. The **Hybrid pack** includes an 8" drum pad and mount, a cowbell trigger, and the Nspire module with BFD Eco sample software.

MEINL has expanded the **Byzance Dark** line with thin, soft-sounding, and small-belled **20"**, **22"**, and **24" Big Apple rides**. The **Bass Box** is designed to provide a deep, low-volume cajon/kick drum sound in a low-profile package.

NATAL is making drums from tulipwood, which is said to have similar projection to maple and more tone than ash. This series is called **Café Racer** and has 7-ply shells.

This year, **PAISTE** went super-big, releasing a **26" Giant Beat ride** and **17" 2002 Sound Edge hi-hats**.

PEARL's **Music City Custom** program offers forty-three drum sizes in two shell types (Reference and Reference Pure) and twenty-nine finishes, for ultimate customization, with guaranteed delivery within fourteen business days. In addition, updated **Eliminator Redline** pedals incorporate some of the company's innovative Demon Drive technology, such as Ninja skate bearings in the sprocket and axel, plus lighter-weight interchangeable cams.

PROMARK sticks are now available with **acorn tips**, and some models can be purchased with the new **Activegrip** coating, which gets slightly tacky as it heats up during use.

The **REMO** **Crown Percussion cajon** has a fixed faceplate without screws. The company has also developed a new **drum key** with a magnetized tip, an extra-long neck, a rubber grip, and a hex-shape top for use with a drill. And **Silentstroke mesh heads** are available on Remo's classic practice pad.

GEAR OF THE YEAR

New in electronic percussion is **ROLAND**'s **EC-10 ELCajon**, which allows players to layer drum and percussion samples from thirty preset kits on top of its studio-quality acoustic tones.

SABIAN has replaced its affordably priced XS20 series with the **XSR**, which features additional hammering and enhanced bell shapes and bow profiles. The **HH Vanguard** is the first of the old-school designs acquired from Crescent to be released by Sabian. These thin cymbals have smaller bells and pinpoint lathing for controlled attack.

The Superstar series was one of **TAMA**'s most popular lines of the '70s and '80s. The all-maple **Superstar Classic** is an affordably priced tribute to the original that incorporates the company's modern advancements, such as the Star mount and the striking cool jet blue burst finish shown here. The ever-popular **Iron Cobra** and **Speed Cobra** pedals have also been upgraded with a new clamping system, swiveling springs, and ball bearing hinges.

TRX is commemorating its tenth anniversary with the **X series**, which features deep hammering for a more exotic, traditional sound. New from the Chinese-made CRX line are **Stack Packs**, which are competitively priced ($70–$140) stackers comprising different splash/China combos for a range of short, trashy sounds.

TURKISH teamed up with drummer/percussionist Jarrod Cagwin to develop the **Soundscape series**, which includes exotic-sounding effects crashes, rides, Chinas, and hi-hats that can be played easily with sticks, mallets, or bare hands.

TYCOON combined the bass tones of the African udu with the deep rattle of an Afro-Cuban shakere into a new instrument called **Udukere**. Top drumset endorser **Gabor Dornyei** has developed a percussion pack that includes a plastic block, tambourine, and mount, and the company redesigned its hi-hat tambourine with a reinforced striking bar for greater durability.

New drumsticks from **VATER** include Dream Theater drummer Mike Mangini's multi-diameter **Wicked Piston** and barrel-tipped **Keg 5A and 5B** models. The **Tacky Sack** rosin bag allows for increased grip.

Compact and Lightweight

One trend we spotted among many manufacturers this year is portability, whether in the form of lightweight hardware or full compact drumsets.

DIXON has the ultra-flexible **Jet Set Plus**, which can be configured like a standard set or arranged as a stand-up cocktail kit, and it comes with mesh heads on one side so it can be quickly reversed for silent practice. **PEARL's Midtown Compact** comes with a 16" kick (with a riser), 10" and 13" toms, and a 13" snare.

And **LUDWIG**, along with the Roots' Questlove, developed the **Pocket Kit**, which comprises a 16" kick, 10" and 13" toms, and a 12" snare, plus a full set of hardware, a pedal, a throne, and cymbals.

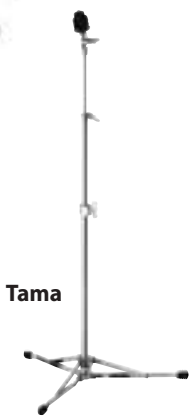
In hardware, **DW** introduced the **Ultralight series**, **Pearl** has the **150 series**, which has a reversible tripod that can convert from traditional legs to flat-base, and **TAMA** has come out with **Roadpro Light** hardware and the **Classic Stand**, which is modeled after the super-light stands that were made in the '60s.

Dixon

Ludwig

DW

Pearl


Tama

VIC FIRTH Signature series sticks now include models for Korn's **Ray Luzier**, modern R&B/fusion great **Chris Coleman**, and Skillet's **Jen Ledger**, plus a special tribute to **Keith Moon** that's an exact replica of sticks made available by the Who drummer's estate.

YAMAHA worked closely with drumming legend Steve Gadd to update the historic 6-ply birch **Recording Custom** kit to incorporate more of the company's modern design innovations.

New for DTX electronics is an upgraded **KP100** kick pad for more realistic response and increased durability, as well as 720 and 760 kits that can be controlled, tweaked, and adjusted using the **DTX700 Touch** app on a smartphone or tablet.

ZILDJIAN developed the B12 bronze **S series** with the working rock drummer in mind, providing bright, explosive tones within a range of splashes, China splashes, crashes, rides, and effects cymbals like the perforated Trash crash. For traditionalists, Zildjian dug into its vault of classic A rides and hi-hats from the '30s to '60s to develop the thin, patina-finished **A Avedis collection**.

New in drumsticks is the **Gauge series**, which includes four models (6, 8, 10, and 12) that have the same length, taper, and hybrid acorn/round "fusion" tip, but with different diameters for various playing situations.

Greg Wells

How does a kid from small-town Canada end up playing drums on records by Katy Perry, Keith Urban, Pink, Greg Holden, Carly Rae Jepsen, Mayer Hawthorne, and global superstar Mika? By harnessing what he calls "sledgehammer moments" and a lifetime of slow-burn lessons.

Story by Stephen Belans

Photos by Paul La Raia

Greg Wells is a deep thinker with a big brain, which he deploys without pretense or arrogance. He's charming and earnest, confident yet self-deprecating. He has a big heart; he gives away a drumset every three months on Twitter and dreams of one day opening a music school for kids. Though he was undeniably born with musical aptitude, his vast skill set didn't develop by accident. He steers an unflinching, deep-seated desire to be better tomorrow than he is today. Greg Wells is always learning.

Wells' first percussion instrument was a snare drum that he got at age five, and although he excelled at formal piano lessons and taught himself to play guitar and bass, he couldn't shake the lure of the drums, and at twelve he got his first full set. Plenty of people in L.A. think of him as a pianist, but Greg will tell you he's still a drummer first. In reality, he quite often is literally a one-man band *and* the engineer in the studio.

Records that Wells has worked on as a drummer, songwriter, producer, mixer, and/or multi-instrumentalist have sold more than 85 million units. Even so, the era of drummers running from session to session earning triple scale, their drums leapfrogging studios so they could fit more work in a day, is history. "The session scene's really dried up," Wells admits. "It doesn't really exist anymore, with the rarest of exceptions."

Today, it's almost imperative that you have a way to record yourself. Wells' studio is extremely well equipped, housed in the requisite modest industrial building. Drumkits line the hallway, keyboards hang off the wall, and guitars are propped up everywhere. An upright and a grand live in the piano room. Racks of outboard gear and a custom console sit in the control room. It's a comfortable space and the epicenter of Wells' work life.

In addition to the artists listed above, Wells has worked with Adele, Twenty One Pilots, Pharrell Williams, Rufus Wainwright, OneRepublic, k.d. lang, and Sir George Martin. Most of that work happens at the aforementioned studio, and most records Wells plays drums on these days result from cowriting sessions at his facility. "Because I write in the same studio I make records in," Wells explains, "I leave everything miked, set up, and ready to go. Then, if something gets a green light, it becomes 'the thing.'"

His credits might suggest a frictionless path to success, but Wells is quick to point out the failures along the way. "Most of my career didn't make any money for anybody, including me," he says. "Years and years of making mistakes—but paying attention."

Turning inevitable rejection into motivation for self-improvement allowed Wells to ultimately experience success, which only pushes him harder. "Lack of focus and laziness will hurt you," he explains. "I think my desire to do this—to chase this dream of making records—is bigger than any talent I do or don't have." Such dogged determination never lets up. "It's that Calvin Coolidge thing," Wells says, paraphrasing the thirtieth president: "Persistence trumps everything—genius, education, talent. Persistence is the thing."

People always talk about persistence, but how does it pay off? Well, opportunities aren't always obvious. "You can never tell how one thing leads to the next," Wells says. "Sometimes it's just one more skip of the stone, and sometimes it's fifteen more circuitous twists and turns."

Wells studied music at Humber College in Toronto, going through the usual collegiate bebop phase, playing both piano and drums. He started getting calls for jingle sessions on the Toronto studio scene but longed to make records. An unlikely and seemingly unrelated chain of experiences eventually made that possible. Circuitous twists and turns indeed.

After two years at Humber, Wells received a Canadian government grant to spend six weeks in Los Angeles studying harmony with Clare Fischer, the noted composer whose credits included an ongoing role as Prince's string arranger. Fischer recognized Wells' talent and began recommending him for sessions on piano—mostly

jingles—and his name started getting around. Session work on drums, guitar, and bass came later. Six weeks stretched into twenty-five years and counting.

At one of those initial jingle sessions, the engineer asked Wells to play so he could dial in the piano sound. Wells launched into the last of George Gershwin's "Three Preludes." "In my headphones I noticed a bass playing along with me, but not playing the bass part," Greg recalls. "It was playing the melody, which is like 32nd notes, and just burning!" Wells looked up to see legendary bassist Lee Sklar standing next to him, smiling and playing along. When they finished, Sklar said that he was also a pianist, something most people don't realize, and that he knew the Gershwin piece well. After that unlikely bonding moment, Sklar, too, started recommending Wells for sessions.

On another jingle session, Wells gave a demo of his own songs to a colleague, who played it for Miles Copeland at I.R.S. Records. Copeland offered Wells a record deal and sent him to Rumbo Recorders to recapture what he had done on his little 8-track home studio, but with more polish. The results, while better sonically, lacked the vibrancy of the demo and became a lasting lesson on the contrast between creating and re-creating. (It's one of the reasons Wells has his studio constantly at the ready.) As Wells tells it, the silver lining was that the label went bankrupt before his record could be released. Instead, Copeland recruited Wells to produce other artists and offered an invitation to an exclusive songwriting retreat at his French castle.

At the castle, writers were paired off to collaborate. Wells wrote a song with Howard Jones (of "No One Is to Blame" fame) that had a reggae vibe. When it came time to record the demo in the castle's studio, Wells planned to play drums and overdub bass. Of course, Miles Copeland has a brother named Stewart who's known to have a flair for reggae-tinged grooves. Turns out the Police drummer was also at the retreat, and Greg found the nerve to approach his teen-years idol ("I wanted to *be* Stewart Copeland") to play on the demo. To his surprise, the legendary drummer agreed.

Wells laid down a convincing reggae bass part while Copeland played drums. Impressed by his collaborator's versatility, Copeland began telling the other writers at the retreat that Wells was a "studio Swiss

The Sharpest Knife in the Drawer

Stewart Copeland on Greg Wells

I met Greg at a fancy castle in France at a songwriters' retreat. It was an incredible experience rubbing up with all kinds of great musicians and players like Greg. He has an original spark. The tunes he comes up with are not anodyne, milquetoast, chart-bound sounds. There's something quirky. He has his own voice, a very distinctive music sensibility.

When people like Greg sit on the drums, they do so with a purpose that is *not* being a star drummer. They kind of understand from the point of view of a songwriter what the drums are for, and they play the drums in support of the song more than in support of their own career as a flash drummer. There's a very different vibe that comes from that.

He can sing; he plays drums, guitar, keyboards; he can produce. He knows where to put the microphone. He has a wide variety of skills that make him very useful in the studio. There are "players," like guitarists who can pull out any style, who are like Swiss Army knives, but in Greg's case, as a producer and music collaborator in a broader sense, he very much *is* a Swiss Army knife.

BENNYGREB

The Time Machine

Vintage Red Oyster
Made in Germany

*The **SONOR** team, in cooperation with artists and collectors, worked tirelessly to bring the Vintage Series drums as close as possible to the look, feel, and sound of its predecessor from the 1950's and 60's. **SONOR** then combined this with it's knowledge of modern drum building to create an instrument that will hold up to today's modern playing.*

SONOR.COM

SONOR Vintage Series

Tools of the Trade

"In the studio, my go-to sound is vintage Slingerland Radio King drumkits," Wells says. "I have several drumsets made by different manufacturers that have based the design on the old Radio King build and sound. I keep coming back to a drumset that Matt Chamberlain recommended to me in Seattle. It's a 1940 Slingerland Radio King kit with a 26" bass drum. It records better than anything else I've got, and I put it on pop records and everything else. My favorite snare drums are a Black Beauty reissue snare that I bought from West L.A. Music in 1994 for $333. That drum never disappoints. My other two favorite snare drums are a Sonor bell brass that sounds like the most glorious punch in the stomach, and a 5" vintage 1981 Tama bell brass that sounds like a Black Beauty on steroids. All of these snares are capable of many different sounds and pitches, and consistently record like a dream."

Army knife." (See sidebar.) They collaborated when they got back to California and remain friends.

Wait a minute…Wells played a convincing reggae bass part? "As a teenager, I actually played with a real reggae band from Kingston, Jamaica," Greg says. "I learned it from them."

The band had a drummer for its Canadian tour but needed a percussionist, and Wells' small hometown of Peterborough, Ontario, where the tour started, wasn't exactly teeming with candidates. "Somehow I got

Sowing the Seeds of Drums

Greg Wells' Twitter drumkit giveaway, referenced in this article's intro, was devised for people who want to play but don't currently have drums. According to Wells, the age limit is four years old to 130. "To enter," he explains, "send a video clip of you drumming on anything, like a friend's drumkit or your own kitchen table, to my Twitter account [@greg_wells], with a link for me to view."

the call," Wells says. "I toured with them the whole summer." Recognizing Wells' musicality but lack of familiarity with the genre, his bandmates were patient and encouraging, showing him what he needed to know. "I was just sort of improvising, and they said, 'No, no, no, here are some patterns. This goes with what he's playing on the drums. Hear what the piano player's playing? This goes with that; it goes with what the bass is doing. It's filling in all the holes—that's how it works. Don't worry about showboating. This is very much a team effort. Be on the team.'"

Not only did this experience help Wells years later when writing and recording with Jones and Copeland, but it opened his eyes to assembling the interlocking parts of an arrangement, knowledge that he now puts

to use on a daily basis. "It's like to make the game of chess work, there's a reason the pawn can do what the pawn does, and there's a reason the knight does what it does." He found the big-picture lesson hidden in all of it. "There's a lot of freedom in structure."

Wells' musicianship and production display a distinctly cinematic flair, with dramatic tension and release. That's no accident. Wells has a longtime interest in foreign film, and the autobiography of Japanese director Akira Kurosawa laid the groundwork for his approach to making records. Kurosawa recommends immersing yourself in the classics to figure out what makes them tick; Wells applied that to music by dissecting what makes great songs great, what makes great records great.

Kurosawa also suggests that aspiring directors learn and experience every single job in the making of a film, from writing a great story to turning it into a script, from acting before the camera to how to score the music, from learning what lens to use for any given situation to costume design. "He said: If you get all that together, then you might have a shot at being a really good film director," Wells explains. "And that hit me like the best sledgehammer in the forehead. It really connected with me, and from that day on, that's been my goal, which is to take a really wide, sort of macro path. It inspired me, and I got it."

Wells' other big lesson from film came from a more succinct but no less influential quote by English director David Lean, best known for spectacular epics like *Lawrence of Arabia*. Lean's advice? "Don't be boring," Wells says. "That was it! Sledgehammer!"

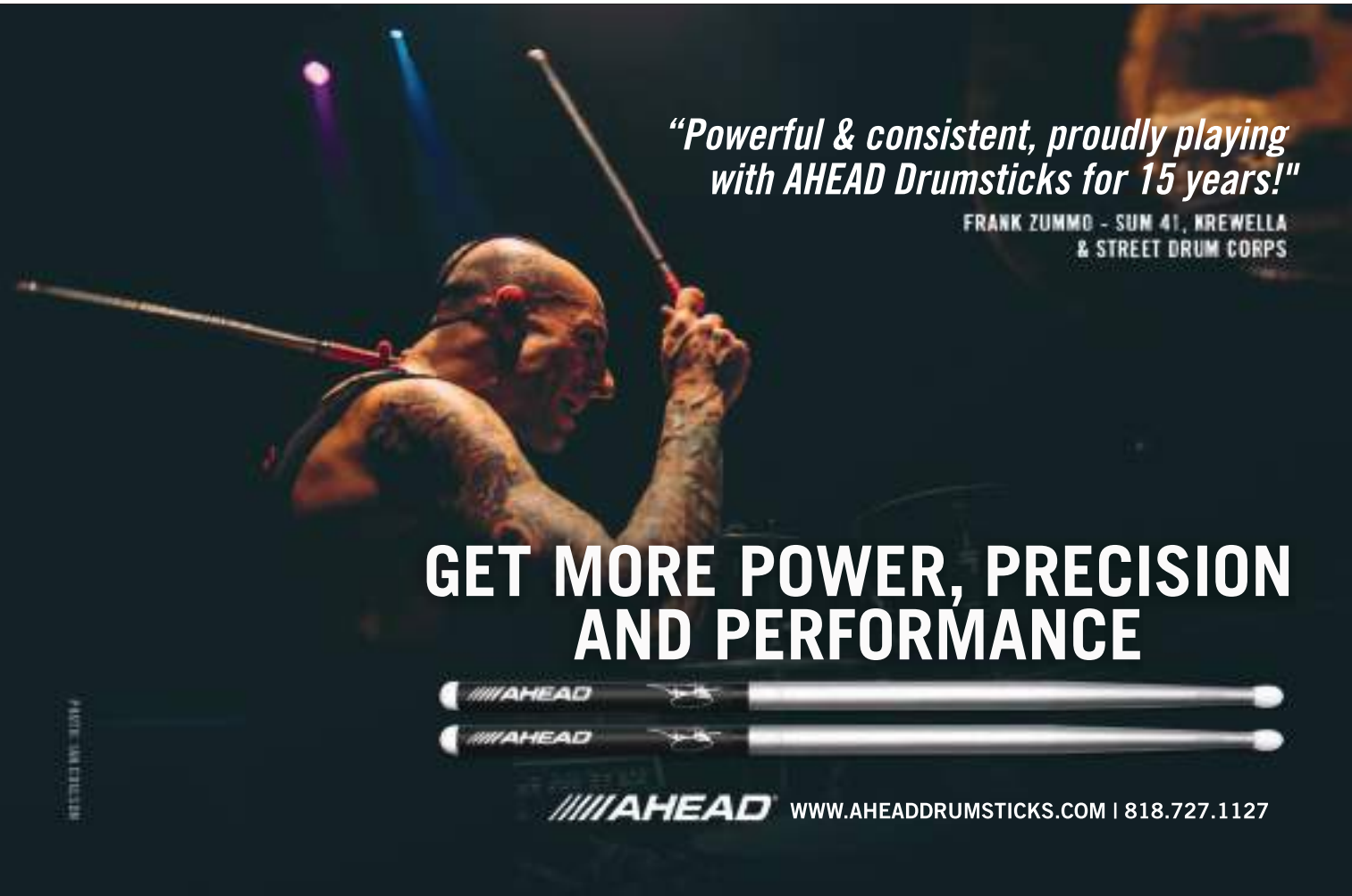
The fusion and application of these two pieces of advice continue to inform Wells' work. "I like things that don't sound like anything else," Greg says. "That really attracts me. My favorite qualities in music are a boldness, a sense of humor, and a good amount of surprise. I don't like to see the joke coming."

Wells can lay down a four-on-the-floor beat with the best of them, but he finds ways to drive a groove without defaulting to standard practices. He's apt to ride on toms or a rim instead of a hi-hat, or simply leave space to let the piano or guitar carry the subdivisions. He'll sneak in an unexpected jab or stab—sometimes subtle, sometimes daring—elevating a syllable in a way that emphasizes the lyric and not the drums.

When cowriting or producing, Wells gets the artist to cut a scratch vocal and guitar or piano as early in the process as possible, to have a framework from which to work. Drums often come next. How does he know what to play when the track is still in such a raw, bare-bones form? "After doing this so many times for so many years, I sort of hear the whole record in my head before I ever go out there," he explains. "I think of it all as accompaniment. I don't delineate between 'here comes the bass,' 'here comes the drums.' It's the same brushstroke—accompaniment to telling the story.

"There are a few people that I work with consistently that are really great at producing me as a drummer while I'm producing them as an artist," Wells continues. "Katy Perry is one of them. She's great at that stuff." Perry's input was key to the giant drums in the chorus of "Choose Your Battles," from her most recent album, *Prism*, but Wells says she had a vision for the drums even on her debut. "I still remember doing 'Waking Up in Vegas,' and she'd be coaching me: 'That's great! No, don't do that, do more of this, and give me a bigger fill here.' That helps a lot.

"Sometimes the best drum part is to play nothing for two bars," Wells says, "and I don't know that when I'm drumming on the thing. When you're mixing and you solo a group



of instruments just to hear what's going on, you realize that it sounds so much better than the whole track playing."

Getting down to the essence of telling the story as directly as possible is a recurring theme with Wells, who shares an anecdote involving a session he once did with legendary songwriter Burt Bacharach. "We had a live orchestra, just a completely blown-out session for a week at Capitol Studio A. He would say, 'No orchestra for the first thirty-two bars,' even though we hired an arranger who'd written amazingly gorgeous music top to bottom. Burt would say, 'Just nylon-string guitar and vocal at the top,' and everyone would kind of look at each other: *What's going on?* Until we heard it. He was right every time! He would just remove and sculpt and take away." After the session, Bacharach explained that he always strived to see how naked the arrangement could be and still feel like the song. The lesson stuck.

"I'm naturally more of an indulgent musician," Wells says. "I like being really complicated. I like playing grooves in 19/16. I like a *lot* of information coming at me." He pauses and takes a deep breath, emphasizing what comes next. "It is *way* harder to do something simple on a level of excellence, to boil it down to the kernel of the idea and just be true to that little nugget of whatever the muse decided to deliver.

"There are so many really great drummers capable of extreme pyrotechnics that are impressive and unbelievably exciting to watch. But I'm telling you as someone who watched a lot of record producers make records when I was one of their hired musicians, and now as someone who has been hired to produce records for a long time: If anyone showed up on a session and unleashed stuff that was 'look at me' and it didn't fit the song, they would immediately get booted out of the studio.

"It happens," Wells laments, "and it's brutal. There's a very short list of people you can bring into a studio under the scrutiny of microphones a half inch away from every drumhead, with speakers that reveal everything in the most merciless, unforgiving way, who can play at a level of excellence that makes the song sound like a better song. To me, that is the true benchmark to hit."

Wells points to two of his favorite drummers, both of whom have worked in his studio. "The thing about Jim Keltner or Matt Chamberlain is they will nine times out of ten play pretty simply, but it's the most gorgeous, most exquisite version of simple you've probably ever heard. As minimalistic a drummer as Keltner is, he will surprise you with this lovely little technical flourish that you cannot pull off if you're not just a mind-blowing drummer. But he barely ever uses that stuff, and the feeling he imparts from his drumming is so immense. It just fills your soul. *That's* the thing to shoot for. It's all about the right energy for the song, like two magnets that go together. You have to make it not about you. I only learned it from tripping and breaking my nose a gazillion times and realizing, *Oh, that didn't work.* A lot of it is getting out of the way of your own ability. Forget that it's you playing and somehow let the music play you. That's when things get really good."

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N-UZD™
AUDIO

Adam Rudolph

Spirit of the Drum

Story by Jeff Potter

Photos by Paul La Raia

In the liner notes to the album *Turning Towards the Light*, Adam Rudolph comments on one of his compositions, explaining, "a triple-diminished cosmogram is explored." Of another track, he notes, "In this orchestral narrative, entities of macro or micro electro-magnetic formulations glow." Lost yet? That's okay. Rudolph's main concern is that his listeners—and the musicians performing his compositions—experience the music with open ears, hearts, and minds. There's substantial complexity in Rudolph's art, but go with the flow (and the groove); above all else, he values the spiritual results.

Rudolph is a *seeker*. From street drumming to formal education to rhythm quests around the world, the percussionist, composer, and conceptualist has sought the connectivity between global traditions, and in the process he's developed his own unique approach to hand drums.

After touring with Don Cherry in 1978, Rudolph returned to his native Chicago and, along with Gambian kora player Foday Musa Suso, formed the pioneering Mandingo Griot Society, a unit mixing world rhythms with jazz and R&B. Rudolph has since collaborated with many international masters, including Hassan Hakmoun, L. Shankar, Ali Jihad Racy, and Badal Roy. He's also performed with jazz notables such as Pharoah Sanders, Herbie Hancock, Sam Rivers, Wadada Leo Smith, and Lester Bowie. And he enjoyed a fruitful twenty-five-year partnership with Yusef Lateef up until the reed player's passing in 2013. The two toured and recorded extensively, exploring lengthy improvisational duets on their vast palette of international instruments.

Rudolph's unique rhythmic/compositional concepts have been most fully realized by three ongoing ensembles he spearheads. Since 1992, Moving Pictures has highlighted his eclectic writing and expressive, interactive hand drumming that organically mixes jazz and world music with experimental daring. Go: Organic Orchestra was launched in 2001 from Rudolph's desire to create an orchestral approach to world music. He's traveled the globe creating various aggregations of "Go," teaching musicians his concept of "cyclic verticalism" and supervising the ensembles with his conducting style, which mixes structure with spontaneous improvisation. The newest "Go" configuration, captured on the ethereal *Turning Towards the Light*, is the Go: Organic Guitar Orchestra, an eleven-piece, all-guitar, all-star ensemble that includes Nels Cline, Rez Abbasi, and Joel Harrison.

But the most drum-centric of Rudolph's groups is Hu: Vibrational, whose fourth release, *The Epic Botanical Beat Suite*, offers an intoxicating tableau of layered percussion played by Rudolph, Brahim Fribgane, James Hurt, Matt Kilmer, Tim Kieper, Keita Ogawa, and Tripp Dudley, along with special guests including bassist Bill Laswell. It's a grooving meeting of world rhythms, jazz, and experimental hip-hop.

"That record is a milestone for me," Rudolph says. "It's the first time I've really been able to have players of that caliber lay down the rhythms that I've been composing all these years on such a high level."

Here, Rudolph enlightens *MD* readers on rhythm, cycles, and the sacred.

MD: Your ensembles are founded in your personal rhythm concepts.

Adam: The percussionists who play in the new Hu: Vibrational play in the New York version of Go: Organic Orchestra as well. So over time they've learned my concept of rhythm. I call it "cyclic verticalism," which is explained thoroughly in my book, *Pure Rhythm*. I use graphic notation that I've developed, depicting boxes that are pulse based. The book covers the same concepts that I teach through my percussionists in the Go: Organic Orchestra and the same way I organized rhythms on the Hu: Vibrational record.

In a nutshell, cyclic verticalism has to do with combining what I call "vertical rhythms"—layered polyrhythms that you might find in certain West African and diasporic drumming—with rhythm cycles that you might find, for example, in the concepts of North Indian drumming. It's a way of combining those to generate "signal rhythms." Those are, for instance, shorter bell patterns found in clave or bell patterns that organize West African and Central African drumming.

I generate my own signal rhythms, which are combined to make "ostinatos of circularity"—big cycles that circle around in layers of rhythms, like you might find in Javanese gamelan music. That's how I generate the form of the music.

I compose these rhythms and teach them through the percussionists in the Go: Organic Orchestra and Hu: Vibrational. I demonstrate the parts to them, but what I'm looking for them to do is bring their own ideas, as well as determine what instruments they might orchestrate the parts with and apply their own feel and vibration to it. For example, Brahim Fribgane is an incredible Berber percussionist from Morocco. He took those rhythms I provided and put a sort of Moroccan "language" on them that makes

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them distinct. And I want every musician to do that.

In my teaching, I believe this: If you can sing it, you can play it. Once you've internalized it, you can then figure how you want to play it. Every oral tradition of drumming is based upon learning to sing it or dance it. The mathematics are important because they help us extrapolate concepts and adapt them to our own ideas. I always say rhythm has three aspects: mathematics, language, and dance.

So I get the percussionists to first learn to sing the patterns. Also, they can look at the paper and see the notation that is shown in *Pure Rhythm*. I don't use Western notation. For example, one of the pieces on the Hu: Vibrational record is in a twenty-one-beat cycle that I often use. [See the chart at right.] It's comprised of five, seven, and nine moving against seven triplets. On the graphic representation, you can see where those triplets line up against that twenty-one-beat cycle.

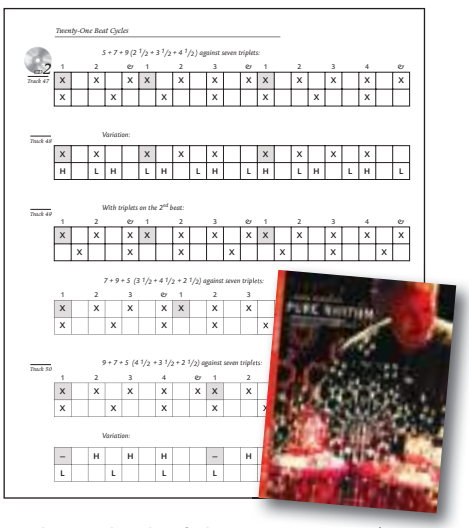
I want the musicians to be as free as they can be, as long as they can keep the functionality of what they have to do and make it *groove*. I'm not into writing a bunch of complicated rhythms just for the heck of it. I want them to groove and have their own breath, form, and shape.

MD: *The Epic Botanical Beat Suite* is more electronic than previous Hu: Vibrational releases.

Adam: My idea on this one was to do some extreme processing in the mix. The idea from that came to me from this: Many African instruments have an extra rattle or a snare to "complexify" the overtones. Those are sometimes referred to as the "voices of the ancestors." There's a layering, a shadow rhythm that echoes from the primary rhythm of what you're hearing. I wanted to create that overtone layer using modern technology.

MD: Your interactive conga style evolved differently from the typical "rhythm section" approach.

Adam: It was never my desire, even when I was a teenager, to be a great Cuban-style hand drummer or Latin drummer or tabla drummer. I *studied* all of those traditions. But I'm of the Charlie Parker school, where you have to live it in order to play it. I grew up around blues and jazz and black music



on the south side of Chicago, so I wanted to reflect *my* experience, my environment. I wanted to figure out my own way of approaching the hand drums. When I practiced, my *ideas* led my technique. I've been much more influenced by things I heard from Elvin Jones and Tony Williams—trying to figure how I could play *that* concept on the hand drums.

MD: You've cited conga player Big Black as a major influence.

Adam: Big Black invented a way of approaching hand drums that was completely different from the Afro-Caribbean way. We became friends. He showed me a

Tools of the Trade

"What I call my 'handrumset,'" Adam Rudolph says, "consists of three vintage Valje congas, a djembe made in Ivory Coast, [five] Moroccan tarija drums, a larger doumbek, a zabumba drum that I got in Bahia [that acts as a bass drum], and [a pair of] Igbo bells from Nigeria. I play all handmade drums, many of which I get from Motherland Music in L.A. On the Hu: Vibrational CD I did not play this setup, as that album featured group drumming that I composed. The cymbal I use was given to me by the Crescent company. I play this setup standing up, and it's the primary one that I use when I play live.

"Like many percussionists, though, I have many instruments that I play—kalimbas of several kinds, cajon, udu, gongs, talking drum, bata, cymbals…. You can see more complete lists in the notes for some of my duet recordings on the metarecords.com CD release pages. On those recordings and in my concerts I also play two stringed instruments: a sintir from the Gnawa [people] of Morocco and a mouth bow. I also do overtone singing, which I learned in 1975. And now I use electronic processing live, which I started doing with Jon Hassell in the 1980s, although I studied electronic music at Oberlin from 1972 to 1976."

couple of fundamental ways of approaching the hand drums that completely liberated my thoughts and allowed me to play more spontaneously and develop my own voice over time. I was able to dialogue with the form and with other musicians much more spontaneously, instead of being locked into a pattern.

There are two important threads for me regarding drums. One of them is developing my language as a hand drummer. The other part is being a rhythm composer. That's something that's not always given its due—great rhythm composers like Doudou N'Diaye Rose from Senegal, or [Indian harmonium and tabla player] Jnan Prakash Ghosh, or my tabla teacher, Pandit Taranath Rao. In America, a great rhythm composer would be someone like James Brown.

MD: Your conga playing includes lots of finger technique. How did you integrate that?

Adam: I didn't do it in a conscious way. Over time you just have to be inventive. I'd been serious about tabla for many years, so I had the finger technique. I'm always working to combine the finger technique with the flat-hand technique, which is the more traditional way of striking the conga or djembe. The short answer is "I'm still working on it." [laughs] Also, I use thinner goatskins on my drums, because they're more responsive to the fingers.

MD: The spiritual aspect of drumming has obviously been as important to you as technique.

Adam: I believe that intentionality is the basis of approaching the drum. If you play with the hands, there has to be a certain mindfulness and intentionality and respect, because you're moving from silence to sound. In a way, it's a sacred act. You're moving from what they call in India *nada brahma*—which is the un-struck sound, also called *sese* in the Kongo culture—and moving into audible vibration. So when you strike the drum, you're creating *om*, because you're bringing all of these overtones into being. Hand drums are incredible; they're the only instrument with that direct of an experience. That feeling, skin on skin—it's direct in how it affects your body. I'm a longtime practitioner of yoga; it's about body, mind, spirit. When you strike the drum, that energy is going directly into your hand at the same time that the vibrations are going into your body and ears. That's some powerful stuff.

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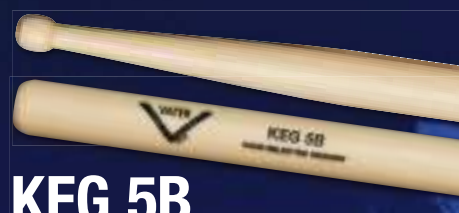

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JOSH BLOCK

For ten years he plied his trade with the adventurous Texas rock band White Denim. Recently he's dedicated his significant playing, engineering, and producing skills to the Grammy-nominated old-soul singer Leon Bridges.

Drummer bud **Jeff Ryan** of the band Pleasant Grove sat down with him to connect the dots between progressive with a small *p* and rhythm and blues with a big R&B.

It's always exciting to have an in-depth conversation with a musician who's taken the necessary time to hone his craft to the point that, when he sits down to create, the expression and the art seem merely an extension of his inner self. Josh Block, drummer, producer, engineer, and the creative force behind the new Niles City Sound studio, where the following interview went down, is one such musician.

Niles City, which sits inside a new venue named Shipping and Receiving in Fort Worth, Texas, is where Leon Bridges' remarkably authentic-sounding soul collection *Coming Home* was recorded. Where everyone played together in one room, much like the musicians of yore did at legendary Sun and Muscle Shoals studios. Where success wasn't measured by what was done in postproduction, but by the magic that happened during the performance. And a *ton* of magic happened on these sessions.

This unique and honest approach is symbolic of not only how Josh Block is as a musician but what he's like as a person. Let's learn more about this unique artist.

Erin Rambo

MD: You recently moved from Austin to the Dallas/Fort Worth area. What inspired the move?

Josh: I grew up in Waxahachie, Texas, and my wife and I lived in Austin for twelve years. Then we realized that we were big believers in Dallas's free-culture environment. We'd spent an afternoon looking at French impressionists and having some amazing sushi, and we thought to ourselves, "We *love* Dallas," so we moved there in 2012. But then I was basically gone for almost two and a half years touring with White Denim. What [White Denim guitarist and Niles City partner] Austin Jenkins and I wanted to do wasn't possible at the time, just because we were touring all the time. We [finally] built the studio about a year and a half ago.

MD: You caught something real and honest with *Coming Home*. The drum sound is amazing in its authenticity. What was your motivation in that respect?

Josh: Honesty. That was all of it. I want it to sound honest from where I'm sitting and from where the guy in front of me is sitting. And, really, a love of ride cymbals! [laughs] My offering as a drummer is being dedicated to ride cymbals. We used three mics, sometimes four. Luckily I engineered and mixed it, and we all played together on the floor, along with the lead and background vocals—just all of us in a room, playing music.

The first time I listened to the first record that I recorded and engineered, I was blown away by how it didn't sound at all like what I was hearing in the room as we were playing. I didn't hear a "real" sound. So with this record, when we were going to listen back, we wanted to hear it like we were sitting in front of the drums, and not have it sound processed.

MD: That definitely comes across. When I hear live recordings of Leon Bridges and then go back and listen to the album, I can't tell the difference.

Josh: There were some songs on the record that were recorded on a broken tape machine and that we didn't think were going to be the final takes. But we listened back after demoing other takes on a different machine, and thought those original takes were the best. I wouldn't change a thing. I've done more [production] to other records I've recorded, but I wouldn't change a thing with this one. That's why we built this studio—this is what you sound like, together, as a band. That's why we play drums. We wanted to play with other players, and I wanted to capture that on record.

MD: Where do you start when you're creating drum patterns?

Josh: I start first and foremost by listening. I focus on the guitar, which I know might not be the natural thing to do. But with Leon's band the guitarist is the lead, and we follow him most of the time. I think of it almost like in Latin grooves, where you're representing multiple instruments. Even if it's a rock groove, I'll kind of orchestrate it. You're just sort of comping with the bass and the guitar, and then eventually those patterns happen, and they inform the section.

In White Denim we would do "part" writing—it's just a natural thing that happened. The grooves were kind of removed from an overall theme. With Leon, we might be just playing a shuffle, but I spent so much time with White Denim that I can reach back to my part-writing skills and make these grooves my own.

Erin Rambo

MD: It's funny you mention Latin, because when I was watching you play a shuffle during rehearsal, I was reminded of Latin music by the way you went to the tom a couple times, and how musical and integrated it felt. It seemed very natural and a great way to vary it up.

Josh: You have a lot of voices, and if you tune your toms right, then you can do it!

MD: Sometimes I find that the first idea that pops into my head is the best—it's instinctive and natural. What are your thoughts on that?

Josh: Generally I end up where I started. It's always easy to forget the first thing you came up with, because, more times than not, you end up so far from there, with ideas of orchestration. You try to build it out. But with the joys of recording and owning your own studio you can track it and then go back and listen back to the first takes and remember, "Oh, yeah—*that's* where we started." [laughs]

MD: You know when you nail it on the first or second take.

Josh: Oh, yeah, and because I mix a lot of music as well, I find myself looking at music in a three-dimensional way, where you're listening to a song and you can think of it visually. It's kind of like looking into a diorama—when you look into the hole in the box, that's your vantage point. You have something kind of anchoring the objects in there, and it's anchoring your field of vision. You know what's closest and you know what's furthest from you. I know it sounds really simple, but it's really important to me, and to me it's similar to when I'm building out a groove for a drumset part. Keeping that idea of a vantage point, you just build it around all these different layers. Like, the kick drum isn't always the most important thing.

MD: You can subtract and add here and there, right?

Josh: Yeah, it doesn't have to always line up with the bass. There's a tune called "Outta Line" that we play with Leon, where my kick is lined up with the guitar, doing this Bo Diddley type of rhythm. I'm actually flipping the Bo Diddley groove around, and it sounds cool to keep the constant rhythm in my hands with the bass player, who's just playing quarter notes, but throw my kick drum at the guitar player.

MD: That isn't a typical "drummer" thing to do, but it's your instinctual musical thing to do—that's what you hear and see in your diorama.

Josh: Yeah, exactly! When I'm kind of looking at the landscape, the anchor is there. As far as pitch goes, he might be higher up in the register, but he sounds like the anchor to me, and I want people to feel that.

MD: It's funny, when you mentioned the diorama aspect to finding and visualizing grooves, I thought you were going to say that you envision a kaleidoscope where everything's floating around and you're trying to grasp onto something—shows you how my mind works.

Josh: [laughs] Yeah, sometimes that happens too!

MD: How do you choose what drums to use in any given situation?

Josh: I've used all different types of kits. On White Denim albums I change drums all the time. I work closely with Bill and Jake Cardwell at C&C to create drums. Bill has a great mind for drums, but he's not into drummers—he's into music. He's a wonderful conversationalist. You can talk to him for hours about songs and music in general. So I start with him and describe where I am within a song, the vibe I'm looking for, and he guides me through some different choices of drums that they can make.

Really it's all about ergonomics with me. White Denim worked with Jeff Tweedy [Wilco] and I was using a 22" kick in the studio, but ergonomically it just wasn't working for me. Even if the drums are tuned correctly, where my body sits within the context of the drums, if it's anything over a 20" it feels strange to me.

I tracked the Leon Bridges album on a 12/14/18 [Gretsch] round-badge kit from the '60s and switched out some C&Cs for the toms. Then I asked C&C to make me the 12/14/18 to emulate a round badge. Jake Cardwell said they had just made a maple/gum/maple kit that would be perfect for me, but they'd only made one, for Daniel Lanois. The next one was for me. It's perfect; it does exactly what I want it to do.

MD: You mentioned ergonomics. We might not spend a lot of time when we're starting out thinking about how we're physically interacting with this instrument.

Josh: It goes back to when I was eighteen. [I saw] Jorge Rossy playing with Brad Mehldau, and his drums were tuned like a piano. It was musical. The only drumset I could get to sound like it was a CB700! It's a living, breathing thing, you know? Just like when you work on your wrists, elbows, fingers, and then the fulcrum, then the sticks, heads, lugs, shells, etc., it's all very natural. Like the ends of your sticks are where the drums start.

MD: How was playing with White Denim different for you physically and mentally from playing with Leon Bridges?

Josh: White Denim was very physically demanding because of the set lengths, but energy-wise they're equivalent. Playing fewer notes can be just as mentally and physically challenging. Leon is pretty far behind the beat, and that's also challenging, but I tend to let the bass player drive the bus.

MD: It's hard for us as drummers to switch gears between different bands, but doing it well is something we should all strive for.

Josh: You're right—we're part of a bigger organism. If someone asks me to do traditional R&B or whatever, then I'll do it, but luckily when I get hired they usually say, "Just do what you do and support the melody how you feel it's proper to do so."

MD: So, what's next for you?

Josh: We're trying to bring more local and national acts into Niles City. We want to do it with people who maybe can't afford to spend $500 a day to record. That's why we recorded Leon, because he didn't have the type of money to make the record he wanted to—but he did have a bigger vision than he could afford. We just want to keep finding those guys.

BLOCK'S LEON BRIDGES SETUP

Drums: C&C custom maple/gum/maple with nickel-plated hardware and stick-saver hoops
- 6x14 brass snare with nickel-plated hardware (or 5.5x14 luan/poplar)
- 8x12 tom
- 14x14 floor tom
- 13x18 bass drum

Cymbals: Istanbul Agop
- 14" 30th Anniversary hi-hats
- 20" Traditional Flat ride
- 21" Riveted Mel Lewis ride
- Alternates: 12" 30th Anniversary hi-hats, 20" and 22.5" Epoch rides

Mics: AEA, including N22 on snare, R92 on bass drum, and R84s on hi-hats and as overheads

Hardware: Canopus lightweight models

Sticks: Innovative Percussion Ed Soph ES2 model, Innovative Percussion mallets, Brush Fire brushes

Heads: Remo, including Coated Vintage Ambassador snare batter and Coated Diplomat bottom, and Vintage Ambassador bass drum batter and Nuskyn front head

Accessories: Humes and Berg cases, Ultimate Ears Pro in-ear monitors

Preamp/EQs: AEA RPQ500 on snare and bass drum and for overheads, TRPs on toms. Short cable runs used with amps/EQs residing on stage near the drumkit.

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GEARING UP *ON STAGE AND UP CLOSE*

The Winery Dogs' Mike Portnoy

Interview by John Martinez
Photos by Alex Solca

Drums: Tama Starclassic Bubinga in platinum sparkle with single-headed rack toms
A. 5.5x14 Mike Portnoy Signature Melody Master 9-ply bubinga snare
B. 5x12 Mike Portnoy Signature Melody Master 1mm steel snare
C. 7x8 tom
D. 8x10 tom
E. 9x12 tom
F. 10x13 tom
G. 16x16 floor tom
H. 16x18 floor tom
I. 18x22 bass drum

Cymbals: Sabian
1. 14" Vault V hi-hats
2. 18" AAX O-Zone crash
3. 18" HHX China
4. 18" AAX X-Plosion crash
5. 7" Max splash
6. 9" Max splash
7. 19" Artisan crash
8. 22" Custom Shop V ride
9. 20" HHX China
10. 12"/14" Low Max Stax
11. AAX V crash
12. 7" Radia bell

Drumheads: Remo Clear CS Black Dot on top of snares and toms, Clear Powerstroke Pro bass drum batters, and graphic front heads with 4" Drum O's mic hole port

Hardware: Tama Speed Cobra bass drum pedals and hi-hat stand (legs removed and mounted to bass drum), Roadpro snare stands, 1st Chair round-top Rider Hydraulix throne, custom rack system, Atlas boom stand with gooseneck for vocal mic, and custom accessory table (made by Victor Salazar)

In-Ear Monitors: JH Audio JH-16

Percussion: LP Ridge Rider cowbell mounted on Speed Cobra pedal, LP Cyclops tambourine

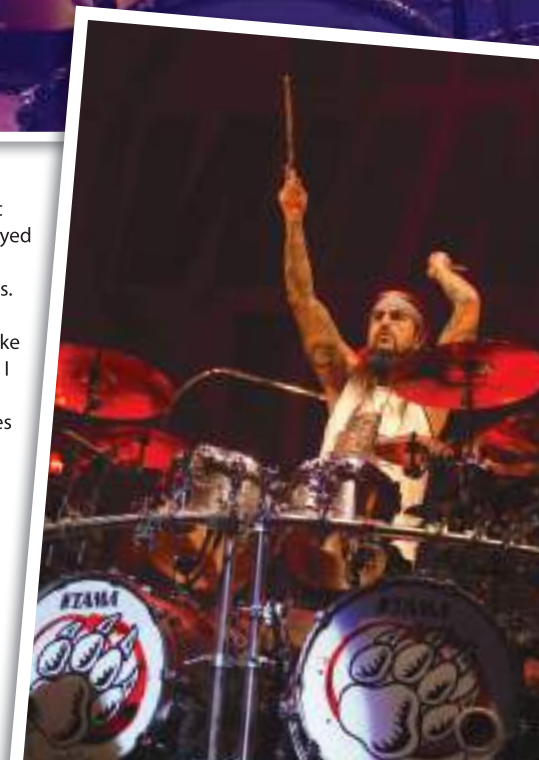
Sticks: Promark Mike Portnoy signature drumsticks (left stick is held with the butt side out), Hot Rods, Stick Depot, and Deluxe Jumbo stick bag

"The most unusual characteristic about this set is the single-headed concert toms," says Portnoy. "I wanted to do something I hadn't done yet. I've never played a single-headed kit, but all of my favorite drummers in the '70s did, from Peter Criss to Roger Taylor to Alex Van Halen. They sound phenomenal—like cannons.

"Everything is tuned slightly high," Portnoy continues. "I'm playing all Black Dot heads, which are single-ply, so they feel different from what I'm used to, like Emperors or Pinstripes. It took a gig or two to get used to the adjustment, but I love the sound and the feel of them now.

"My cymbal setup is symmetrical, like a mirror image. I usually have splashes and bells right in front of me, but this time around I wanted to have a clear view to the audience."

Regarding the Hello Kitty kit that Portnoy carried with him, he says, "I did this ridiculously silly video that went viral where I was playing heavy metal tunes on a Hello Kitty drumkit. It got like two million hits, and being the ham I am, I couldn't resist bringing a little kit on tour with me. If it felt like a good show, I'd grab the kit, run up front, and do my drum solo on it."



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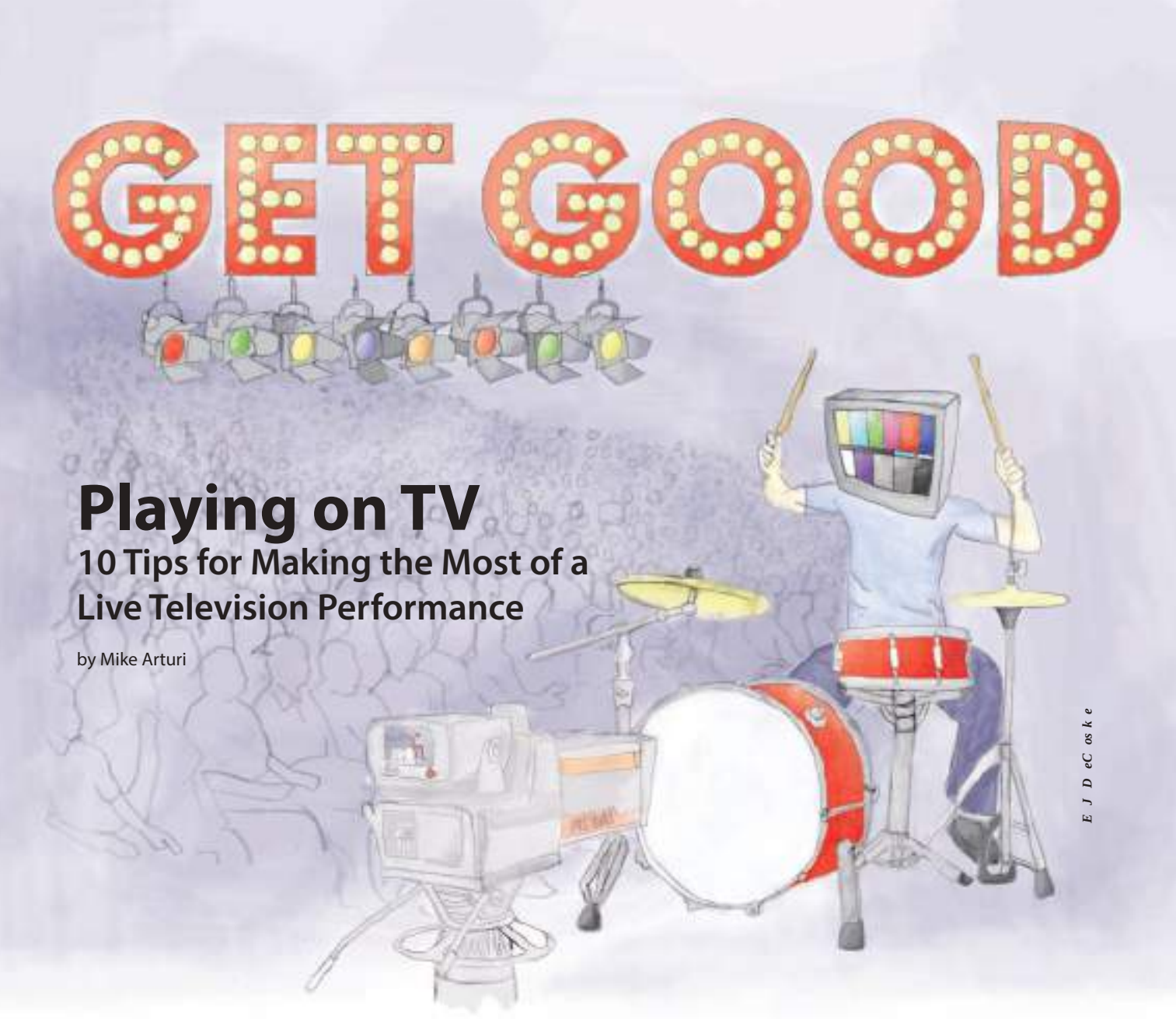


Playing on TV

10 Tips for Making the Most of a Live Television Performance

by Mike Arturi

I recently had the chance to promote an event during a live broadcast of a popular CBS morning show. The demands on me included being interviewed, as well as drumming into and out of four commercial breaks and performing twenty- and sixty-second solos. Adding to the intensity of the situation was the fact that there would be camera close-ups on my hands—not to mention the knowledge that a certain number of drummers out there would be watching. Maximizing this opportunity required focused preparation, and I learned a lot from the experience. I'd like to share some of what I discovered, in the event that you ever get a similar opportunity.

1. Analyze and fully comprehend what's required.

Given the ability to reach millions of people in a few brief minutes, you need to make it count. Ask a lot of questions! Get the information you need to present your best performance. For instance, do they want drum solos, grooves, or both? How long should I play? How many segments are there? Will I start from a cold cue, or will the cameras fade into me? Will I be playing as the cameras bring us back into the show from the break?

With a full understanding of what's expected from both parties, you can plan your content for maximum impact. In this instance, I needed to consider not only what I was going to play but also what I was going to say during the interview segment.

2. Decide what to play.

With the opportunity to play up to ten seconds of eight different grooves, I was able to focus my choices. I knew I wanted to use patterns that would be interesting for drummers and musicians who might be watching, but I also needed to appeal to the general viewing audience. A key element here was refining my choices to grooves I play well naturally, giving me an advantage over the expected adrenaline and nerves that usually accompany this type of environment.

3. Drum specifically for television.

For the segments going into commercial breaks, I had to start the grooves cold. This required the patterns to be in the pocket from the first stroke. I addressed that concern by isolating any stickings

that felt stiff or needed a measure or two to fall into place, and I analyzed and corrected the problem areas. I then practiced the grooves from cold starts, making sure everything flowed properly. The segments coming back out of the commercial breaks needed clean endings to the grooves on cue from the floor producer. To prepare, I made sure I was always counting and aware of where I was in the measure so I could quickly get to the nearest musical exit point.

4. Prepare and rehearse.

A critical element in television production is timing, since shows are produced down to the second. I used the stopwatch feature on my cell phone to time all of the grooves and the twenty- and sixty-second solo segments during my practice. For the grooves, I experimented with various tempos, focusing on a good feel and the ability to play complete measures within a ten-second time allotment. For the twenty-second solo, I opted to mix a groove with various toms, ghost notes, and fills.

As the drummer for the Lovin' Spoonful, I do an extended solo on stage, which lasts about four minutes. I created a framework of components for this solo that I can depend on night after night as a form, while improvising within the various components. For the TV solo, I trimmed the entire back third off the stage version and discovered I could play about four measures of each concept and consistently time out at just under sixty seconds. The focus then became making these transitions much quicker than usual. By modifying a familiar form, I was able to present an interesting solo in a very short time frame.

5. Address non-drumming considerations.

Realizing I would be in front of cameras and a vast television audience, I made a point of being aware of my physical appearance at all times. I sat up straight, smiled, and tried to look engaged. I chose clothing that was natural for me to wear, comfortable yet appropriately upscale. For equipment, I decided to bring a small four-piece kit and a small black mat to put under the drums.

I also wrote a chart that had reminder notes on it. For example, the word *Sly* represented the groove to the Sly Stone song "In Time." The chart also had some brief notation to ensure accurate performance. Finally, I didn't want the obstruction of a music stand, so I set the chart on the floor under my floor tom and behind the kick drum so that it wasn't visible on camera.

6. Plan for the day of the show.

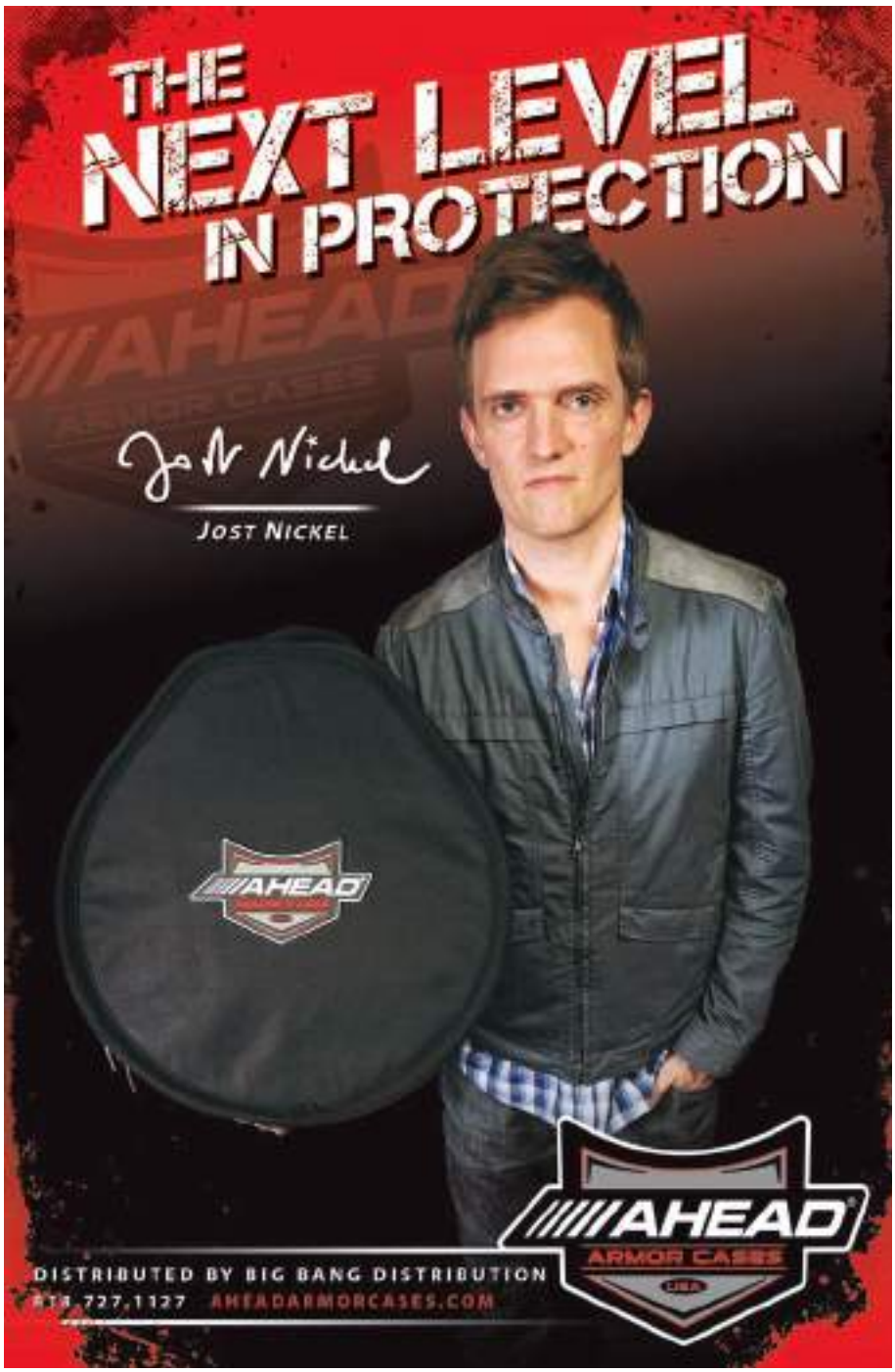
Attention to detail and advance preparation are your two best allies in dealing with the unexpected and unknown. I loaded my car the night before with everything I might need, including a printed hard copy of directions to the studio, clothes, literature on the event I'd be promoting, business cards, and information about the music school I own and operate. I allowed double the normal travel time and extra time to get out the door. I used this extra time when I arrived at the studio, as there was a long process of getting through security, a challenging load-in, and only street parking available. As a result of my bringing the literature, the television personalities subsequently advertised my school to their vast viewing audience!

Think through every detail, large and small, and thoroughly prepare for any given scenario. Controlling the preparation process

will give you the confidence to deal with whatever comes your way on the day of the show.

7. Be flexible during the pre-broadcast run-through.

Having an open mind and being flexible are key elements during the pre-broadcast run-through. Much of what I was instructed to prepare for changed, and a spot was added where "something quiet" had to be played under the air personalities talking. A cymbal roll was suggested, but since I had material prepared, I was able to suggest a nice quiet groove instead. A lot happens very quickly, and TV-specific terminology is used. Ask questions until you clearly understand what is expected. I needed clarification on certain hand signals and had to ask twice before I had it all down.



8. Stay alert during the actual broadcast.

The broadcast itself flowed much like the run-through: precise, timed, and highly professional. My segments began twenty-three minutes into the broadcast. It was only the two on-air personalities, the floor producer, and me in the studio. I waited off to the side, running through the grooves and doing my usual warm-up routine.

It's a surreal experience watching TV personalities read flawlessly from teleprompters as robotic unmanned cameras move around the studio. You realize you're actually in the broadcast as you're watching what you would normally be seeing on your television. When it came time to play, I simply did what I came to do, exactly the way I prepared it. As I sensed an air of approval in the room, I felt that I was a contributing part of the production.

9. Pre-think the interview.

The interview preparation was exactly like the drumming preparation. I was there on live television to promote an event I was producing. Since the interview was going to be brief, I made sure I talked about all of the most important details of my event right at the start. I stuck to the facts, and in order to sound more natural I didn't try to script what I was going to say. I sat up straight, smiled, spoke clearly, and tried to be myself. Much of what we do as drummers regarding preparation and performance can be applied to many of life's demands. Being interviewed is a good example.

10. Remain professional.

At the conclusion of the show, and to my relief, the entire crew from the control room came out and joined the on-air personalities and producer in thanking me for "being so professional." Needless to say, this was a great feeling. However, I never let my guard down. I remained "professional" throughout, thanking them for having me, exchanging business cards, breaking down my kit, loading out, and saying goodbye before returning to my car. I only exhaled and allowed myself to take it all in once I was about a block away from the studio.

Mike Arturi has been the drummer in the legendary folk-rock band the Lovin' Spoonful since 1996. He's also the founder of the nonprofit Universal Music Center in Red Wing, Minnesota, and a faculty member at the MacPhail Center for Music in Minneapolis.

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Teaching Young Children

Time-Tested Advice for Getting Them Going at an Early Age

by Jeff Salem

Nothing is more exciting than watching new students enter my teaching studio for the first time and seeing them react to all the drums, cymbals, percussion, and posters. It's like a candy store for them—they want to indulge and eat it all up.

The first meeting with a potential young student and his or her family is crucial and can be the catalyst for a short- or long-term relationship. In my twenty-plus years of teaching I've derived great satisfaction and enjoyment from working with students of all ages. This article contains the steps I've taken to get the most out of lessons for younger students.

Evaluation

When teaching a beginner student, it's important to start with a basic evaluation. You don't want to waste the parents' time and money if the child just wants to run around the studio and hit things. Keep the evaluation process fun so that you can keep the attention of the child. Potential students might be very shy and nervous at first, so I ask a lot of questions about why they want to play drums, what kinds of music they like, their favorite sports and food, and so on. I find that this interview process is a nice icebreaker, even if I'm doing all the talking.

Next I have students clap a basic pulse of quarter notes along with me. The goal is to see if they can keep a steady beat and count to four. If they can do that, I'll play some simple rhythms on a djembe or conga while they continue to clap and count. I count along with them at first, but after a few bars I'll stop counting and just play. When I stop drumming, I'll ask them to tell me what number I stopped on. This test gives me a good indication of how focused they are, and if they will be able to maintain a steady beat. If all goes well, I give students a djembe and try some simple call-and-response patterns. If they show potential, we move to the drumkit.

If things aren't going as planned and I feel the student doesn't show much interest, I'll suggest that the parents sign up for a program that offers group lessons. Many art and music schools offer lessons for young children that focus on singing, storytelling, dancing, and simple hand drumming.

Another option is to encourage the parents to wait six to twelve months and re-examine their child's interest and maturity level. I've found the development that a three- or four-year-old child goes through every three months is almost equivalent to a year for young adults. The bottom line is that you always want to do what's best for the student and parents. I welcome young students if I feel that they're ready and would benefit from one-on-one private lessons. At this age level the private lesson should not exceed thirty minutes.

Equipment

One of the biggest challenges of teaching small children is getting them to sit comfortably behind a full-size drumkit. There are a lot of drum companies making child-size sets with small thrones, which are ideal for the students to use at home. In my teaching studio, I have them play on a small five-piece kit that has an 18" or 20" bass drum, 10", 12", and 14" toms, and a 14" snare. Usually I have smaller students bring their own throne if they have one.

I lower the hi-hats, cymbals, and toms, and I angle the snare and toms toward the student fairly extremely, which makes it easier for the students to reach the drums. When they grow a bit, I change the angles back to a more normal playing position to avoid developing bad playing techniques.

Some students have a hard time reaching the pedals with both feet, so I often loosen the hi-hat clutch and lock the cymbals in a closed position. This will allow them easier access to the bass drum pedal. If they still can't reach the bass drum pedal, I work with them on grooves that use the floor tom to mimic the bass drum.

Getting Started

Once the student is comfortable behind the drumset, I introduce all the parts of the kit and compare them to family members. For example, the bass drum is dad, the snare drum is mom, the toms are brothers and sisters, and the cymbals and hi-hats are relatives and friends. I explain how the goal of playing this instrument is to have all the family members and friends get along in a rhythmic way.

I have students begin by playing beats 1 and 3 on the floor tom and 2 and 4 on the snare along to some music. We usually play along with a song of their choosing or to one of the many songs minus drums that I have stored on my laptop. We do this

for ten to fifteen minutes. Even if students can't move beyond the floor tom and snare, they're having fun grooving to a song.

The next step is to replace the floor tom part with the bass drum. If the student can do that, then we add the hi-hat. I start with a basic quarter-note beat with the kick on beats 1 and 3 and the snare and hi-hats on beats 2 and 4. I say "alone" when I hit the bass drum and "together" when I hit the hi-hat and snare. As the student plays, I have them say "alone, together, alone, together" instead of counting to four.

I end lessons by filming a clip showing me demonstrating the lesson material and them performing a beat along to a tune. It's always fun to see the look on their faces when they watch themselves playing. Before they leave the lesson, I give them a homework assignment to write down five songs that they want to learn. Even if one of the songs is very advanced, we can still jam to it by playing basic quarter notes.

Building Rhythmic Vocabulary

I perform many drum circles at day-care centers and schools. The easiest way I get students to memorize rhythms is to relate them to food. For quarter notes, I say "fries" or "grapes," 8th notes could be "hotdog," "ice cream," or "pizza," and 16th notes could be "watermelon," "peanut butter," or "pepperoni." An 8th note and two 16ths could be "pineapple" or "hamburger." Two 16th notes and an 8th note could be "apple pie" or "cherry pie." Many times I have students tell me their favorite foods from each food group, and we build grooves and fills around those words. A great word rhythm a four-year-old student taught me was "mashed potatoes." I phrased it as a dotted 8th followed by a 16th note and two 8th notes to create a fun calypso groove.

Reading

I introduce reading to young students when they're comfortable playing simple beats and fills by memory. I use different color highlighters to represent different parts of the kit. The "x" for cymbals is highlighted in yellow, a crash cymbal has a circle around it, and the ride cymbal notes have a line through them. The bass drum notes are highlighted blue, the snare is orange, tom 1 is green, tom 2 is pink, and the floor tom is purple. Over time I remove the colors and have the students read the notation in traditional form. After a year or two, most students are reading basic notation.

As you work on reading with young students, remember to keep the lesson fun and reward them when they've accomplished something. I give out stickers, posters, sticks, banners, and the like.

Parents

Some students enjoy having their parents sit in during the lessons, while others have a more independent streak. For three- or four-year-old kids, I usually have the parents be part of the lessons so that they can learn the material and then assist when their child is practicing at home. I usually have one or two lessons a month when I ask the parents to sit outside so I can see how the student responds. When the parents sit out of the class, I make sure to record the homework assignment so everyone knows what's expected to be practiced and prepared for the next lesson.

Jeff Salem is a Canadian musician, educator, and clinician. For more on him and his teaching business, JS Music Studio, visit jsmusicstudio.com and drumsinu.com.

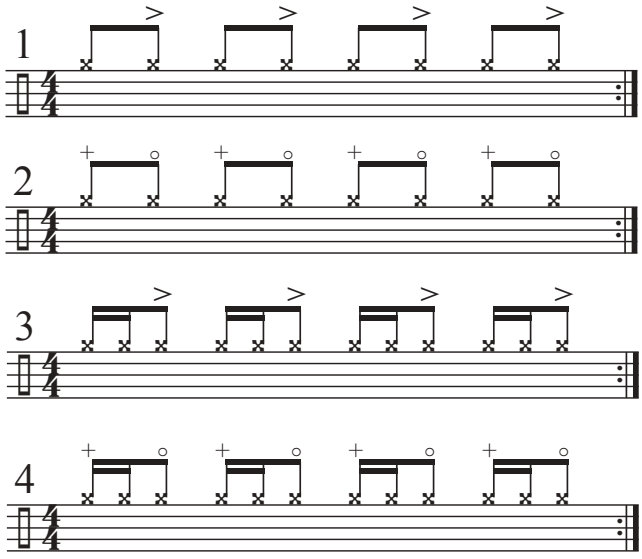
Advanced Disco

Beyond Four on the Floor

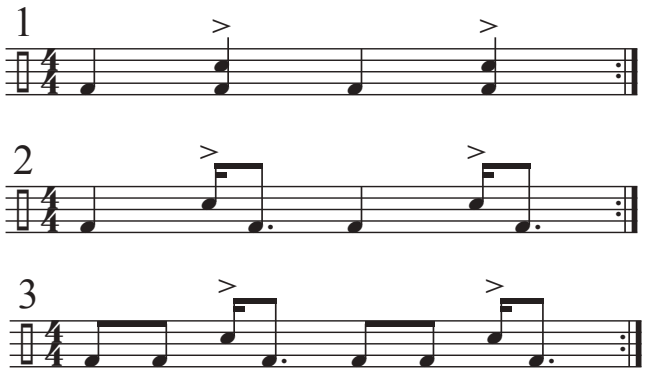
by Rich Redmond

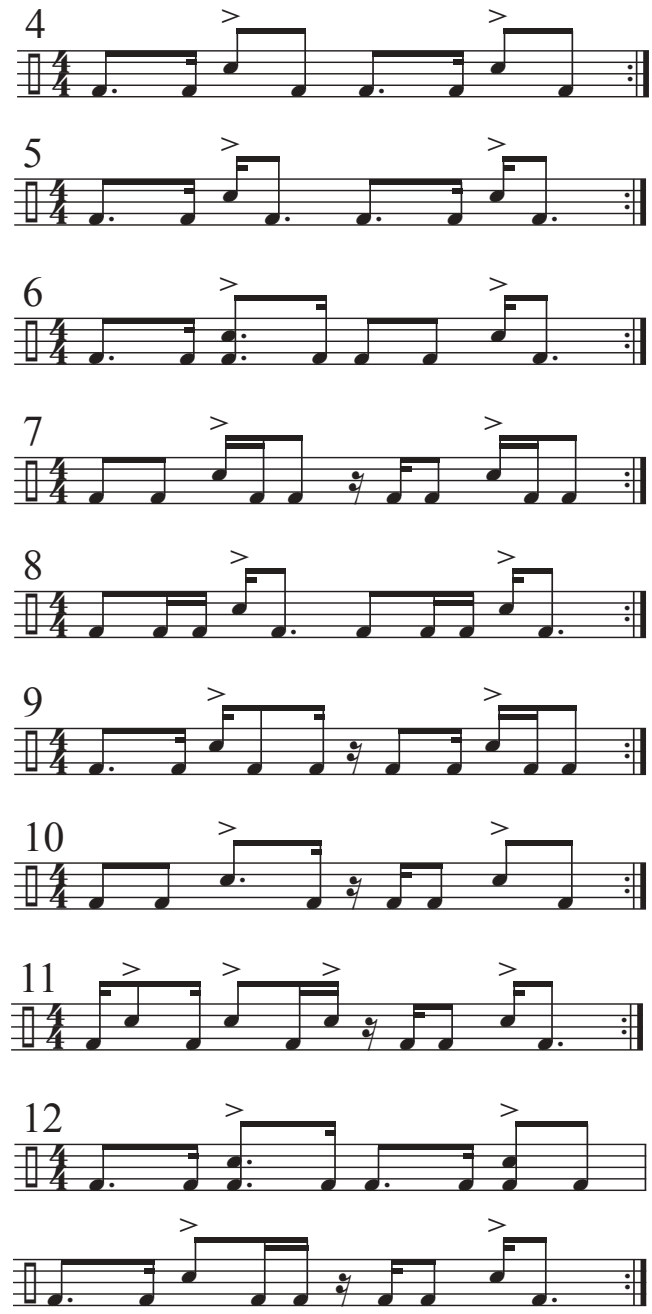
Disco, a style of music popularized in the 1970s, launched dance crazes, drove up record sales, and sometimes caused a lot of frustration among the era's working drummers. (Some players found the repetitive rhythm to be mind numbing.) Much of today's music also heavily relies on repetition. Pop, dance, R&B, and even country music make use of strong four-on-the-floor pulses. In this lesson we'll explore ways to spice up the basic disco feel.

The following hi-hat ostinatos tip a hat to the traditional open/closed disco pattern—we'll accent or open the hi-hat on the "&" of each beat while closing it on the quarter-note pulse. This gives each groove a strong upbeat pulse or lope.



Practice each hi-hat ostinato with the following twelve bass drum and snare patterns. These bass drum phrases are more syncopated and advanced than a standard four-on-the-floor pattern, and they often fall in between the hi-hat openings. This creates a few interesting coordination challenges. The key is to practice these exercises slowly, and then gradually build up speed. Focus on making them sound and feel as comfortable as possible. Enjoy the hustle!





Rich Redmond drums for country star Jason Aldean, is an award-winning clinician, and is an active session drummer in Nashville and Los Angeles. His recent book/DVD, *FUNdamentals of Drumming for Kids* (coauthored with Michael Aubrecht), is available through Modern Drummer Publications.

For a video demo of these examples, visit moderndrummer.com.

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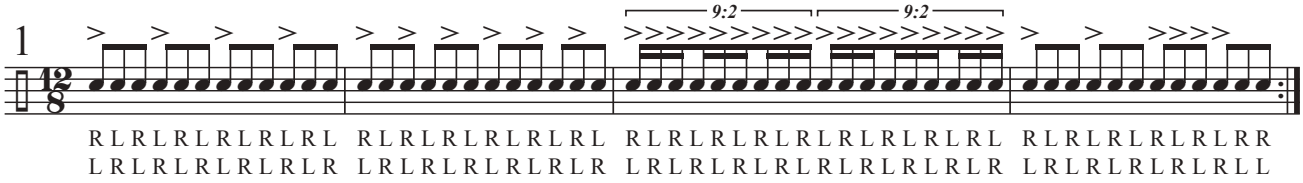
Nine Over Two

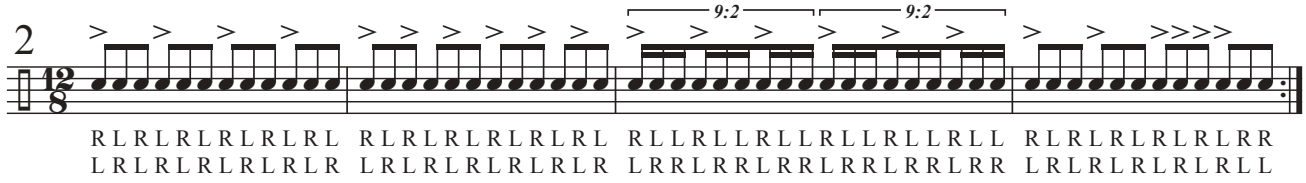
Part 2: Sticking Variations

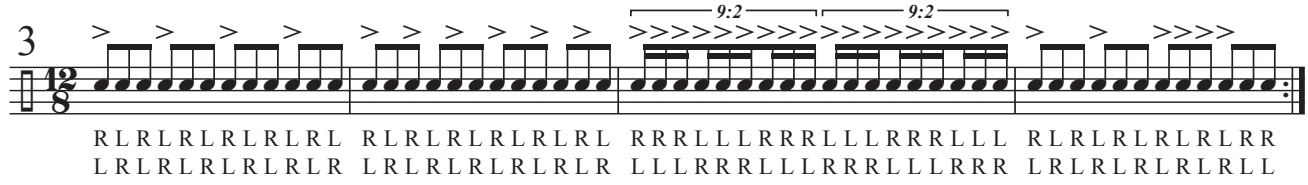
by Bill Bachman

In this article, we'll continue working with the nine-over-two polyrhythm from last month by varying it with four different stickings: singles, "puh-duh-duhs" (RLL), triple strokes, and paradiddle-diddles. All of the exercises will incorporate an accent pattern leading into the nine-note grouping that outlines how the stickings are to be phrased within the polyrhythm. (The dotted quarter note gets the pulse.)

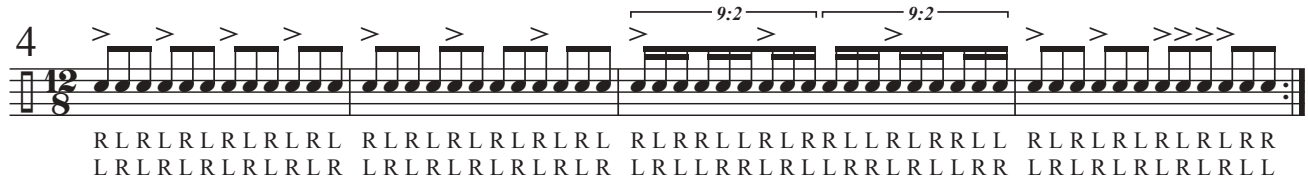
We'll start with single strokes. It may help to put slight accents on the quarter-note triplets within the nine-note groupings at first so that you can keep track of where you are. However, you should ultimately strive for perfectly even free strokes.



Next is the "puh-duh-duh" sticking (RLL). The leading hand should play evenly spaced free strokes across the bar, while the hand playing the low diddles should use a pumping forearm motion with finger control.

The third sticking is triple strokes. Strive to make them sound perfectly even. You don't want three notes that bounce down in a decrescendo. Use quick finger control to add velocity to the second and third beats of each triple stroke.



Our final sticking is the paradiddle-diddle. The accents within the nine-note grouping now fall on the half-note triplet. Use the accented half-note triplet pattern in the bar before the nines to feel your way through them. Focus on the initial accent of each paradiddle-diddle relative to the downbeats. If you know your paradiddle-diddles well, your muscle memory should take care of playing the inner beats evenly.



Bill Bachman is an international drum clinician, the author of *Stick Technique* (Modern Drummer Publications), and the founder of drumworkout.com. For more information, including how to sign up for online lessons, visit billbachman.net.

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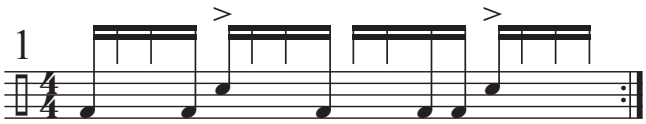
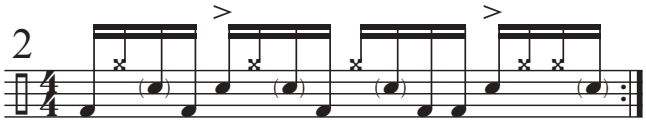
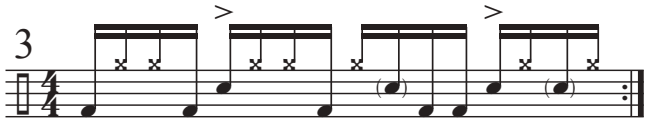
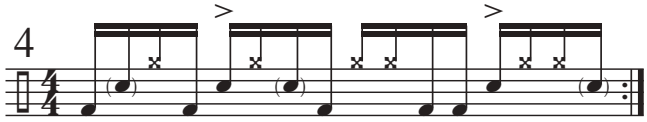
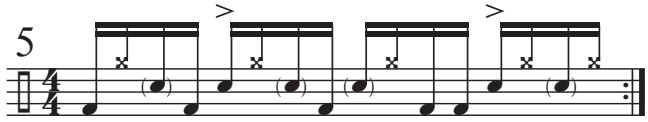
Groove Construction

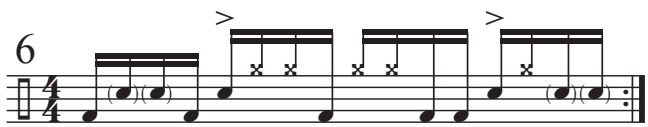
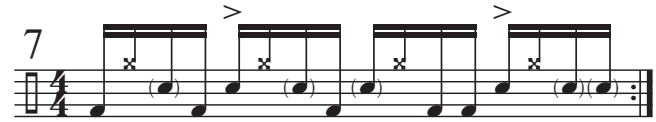
Part 3: Linear Patterns

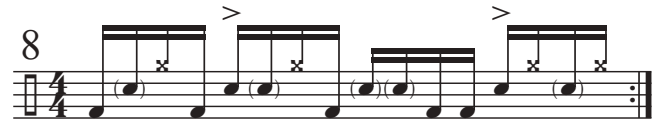
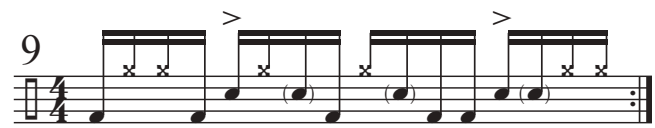
by Ost Nickel

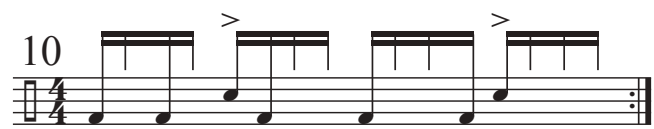
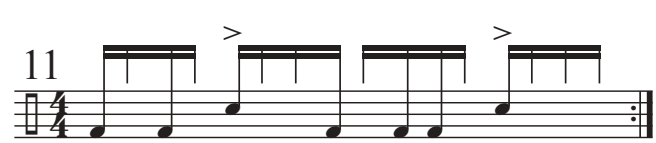
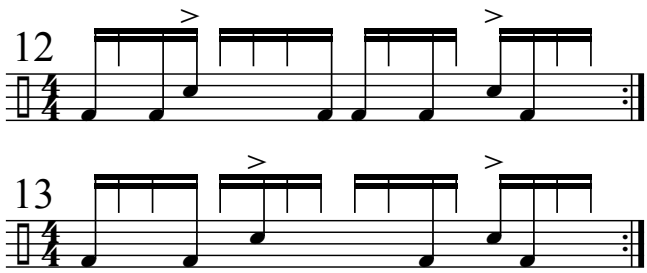
In this lesson, we'll create linear grooves by following three simple rules. Linear grooves never have more than one voice played at the same time. In general, I feel that the two most important elements of a groove are the bass drum figure and the snare accents. We'll start building linear patterns using a skeleton groove that consists of these two components.

The goal is to fill the gaps in the skeleton groove with either hi-hat strokes or ghost notes. We do that by following three simple rules:

1. The right hand plays either single or double strokes.
2. The left hand plays only single strokes.
3. Ghost notes won't immediately precede or follow snare accents.

The application of these three rules can produce a variety of results. Here are a few possibilities.

There are virtually no rules without exceptions, and breaking rules in music has often led to new developments. In the following exercises, we'll change the second rule and add double strokes with the left hand on the snare drum. Occasionally playing two ghost notes in a row can be a nice variation for your phrases. Exercises 6 and 7 demonstrate two grooves where the left hand plays singles and doubles.



Next we'll disregard the third rule, which stated not to play ghost notes before or after snare accents. When you're starting out with these concepts, following that rule makes the patterns easier to play. Although it can be technically demanding to play ghost notes directly before or after snare accents, it can also sound great once mastered.

All of the exercises in this lesson use the same skeleton groove. If you feel like creating more linear patterns, choose a different groove from Exercises 10–13 and continue as described.

I am aware that creating grooves is highly dependent on individual taste. Do not be put off by the fact that there are so many different choices. The aim is to explore one great-sounding phrase and not get lost among all of the possible options.



It's imperative to adhere to the three rules for a long enough period of time to discover patterns that you enjoy playing. You should have the feeling that you're still creating exciting grooves and shouldn't become bored. After that, you're free to break the rules.

If you're interested in these concepts and want more linear groove ideas, check out my book *Jost Nickel's Groove Book*.

Jost Nickel is a top session and touring drummer in Germany, and he endorses Sonor, Meinl, Aquarian, Vic Firth, and Beyerdynamic.

For a video demo of these examples, visit moderndrummer.com.

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Progressive Drumming Essentials

Part 12: Double Bass Boot Camp

by Aaron Edgar

One thing that can separate drummers with great double bass chops from those who struggle is their willingness to push themselves beyond their limits. You have to put in serious time if you want to get significant results. How many hours have you spent on speed and endurance? Whatever the answer, get prepared to work. If you're not exhausted after running these drills, you didn't practice hard enough.

This routine takes a little over an hour and is split into two thirty-minute sets. Each set consists of six bass drum patterns that are played for five minutes each without stopping. Even if your technique starts to fall apart, dig deep and push through until the end. The goal is to reach your breaking point and then push a little further.

Since the focus is on our feet, the hand patterns are open to interpretation. Start with the notated 8th-note hi-hat and snare pattern, but feel free to improvise as long as it doesn't interfere with your feet. A great alternative to this phrase is to match your hand pattern with the feet. (See Exercises 7–11.) Try cutting out the hands to isolate the bass drums. However, don't practice that way exclusively—fast feet are useless if you can't coordinate them with your hands.

Try practicing with tight sounds for your cymbals, because playing on washy cymbals can make it difficult to hear your bass drum accuracy. Closed hi-hats and tight stacks are my preferred choices.

Before starting with set one, stretch your legs. I like to hit all of the muscle groups from my hips down to my shins and calves. You'll be working for a while, so keep water and a towel on hand.

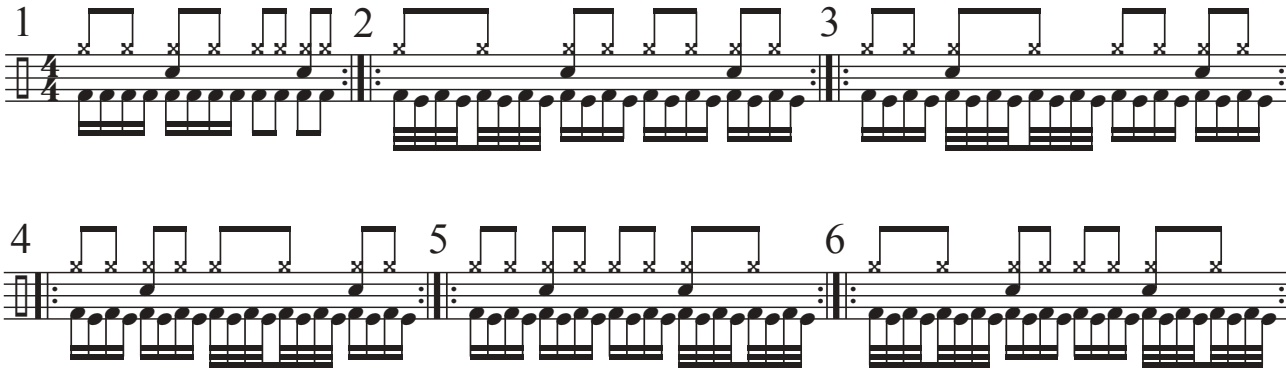
After stretching, strap on ankle weights and set your metronome reasonably below your maximum 32nd-note tempo. If you're not sure what that is, 70–80 bpm is a good place to start.

The Workout Begins

00:01–05:00: The first five minutes is a warm-up. Use this time to isolate each foot. Begin with Exercise 1, playing four bars with only the right foot and then four bars with the left foot. After a minute or two, play longer groups of 16th notes with each foot before switching.

05:01–25:00: At the five-minute mark, switch to Exercise 2 without stopping. Keep advancing continuously in five-minute increments through Exercises 3–5. Stay focused, and maintain consistency and power. If you start to cramp up, pull the notes from a different muscle group. Use your full leg (coming from your hip), your ankles, or a combination of both. Experiment with a heel-down technique to work your shin muscles. Do whatever it takes to power through.

25:01–30:00: In the last five minutes, double the amount of 32nd notes (Exercise 6). Try to push yourself close to failure. You should be barely holding on by the end. If you can make it cleanly through the entire half hour, pick a faster tempo next time.



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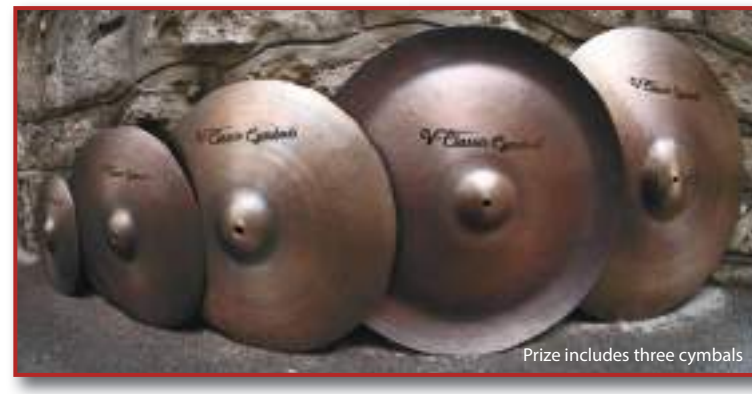
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Break Time

Stand up if you need to, stretch, and towel off. To keep your intensity up, don't rest too long between sets—two or three minutes should be plenty of time. Take off your ankle weights, bump your metronome up 10 bpm, and run the entire set again.

Set Two

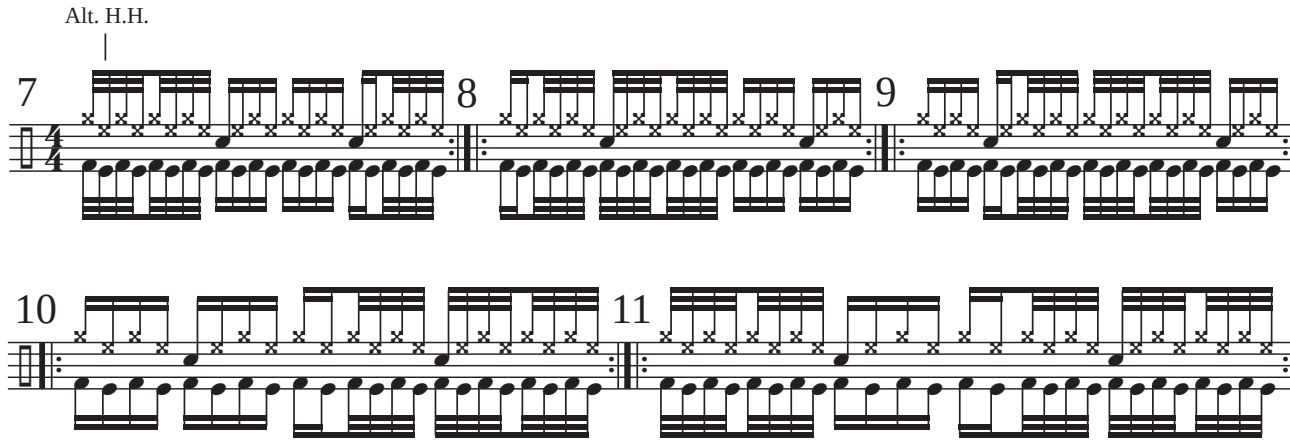
30:01–55:00: You can skip the warm-up (Exercise 1), but you'll need to make up for those five minutes. Either practice one of the beats twice as long, or add one of the more advanced beats from Exercises 7–11.

55:01–60:00: At this point you should be struggling a little. Don't forget that the goal is to push yourself to your limits and beyond. If you get to the end of your second set and you still have energy, repeat the last exercise or add another full set.

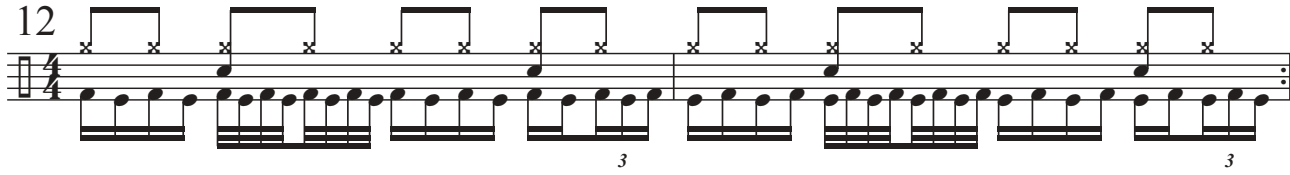
The harder you push yourself, the better your results will be. If you end up going longer than an hour, try more challenging tempos or beats next time. Part of the drill here is to find your breaking point within an hour.

Advanced Variations

For an additional challenge, modify the intensity of the beats to suit your ability level. Exercises 7–11 each have four more 32nd notes and have been notated with the hands matching the feet on two different hi-hats.



For more of a workout, try leading the entire drill with your weaker foot. If you're comfortable leading either way, try switching your lead foot every bar by adding a triplet to the end of the phrase. Exercise 12 demonstrates this idea by placing 16th-note triplets at the end of Exercise 3.



For best results, run through this set of drills two or three times per week. I wrote these exercises for my own development, and they've helped me push through some frustrating plateaus. They can do the same for you.

For a video demo of these examples, visit moderndrummer.com.

Aaron Edgar plays with the Canadian prog-metal band Third Ion and is a session drummer, clinician, and author. He teaches weekly live lessons on Drumeo.com. You can find his book, *Boom!!*, as well as information on how to sign up for private lessons, at aaronedgardrum.com.

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CONCEPTS

Organize Your Gear

Part 2: Riders

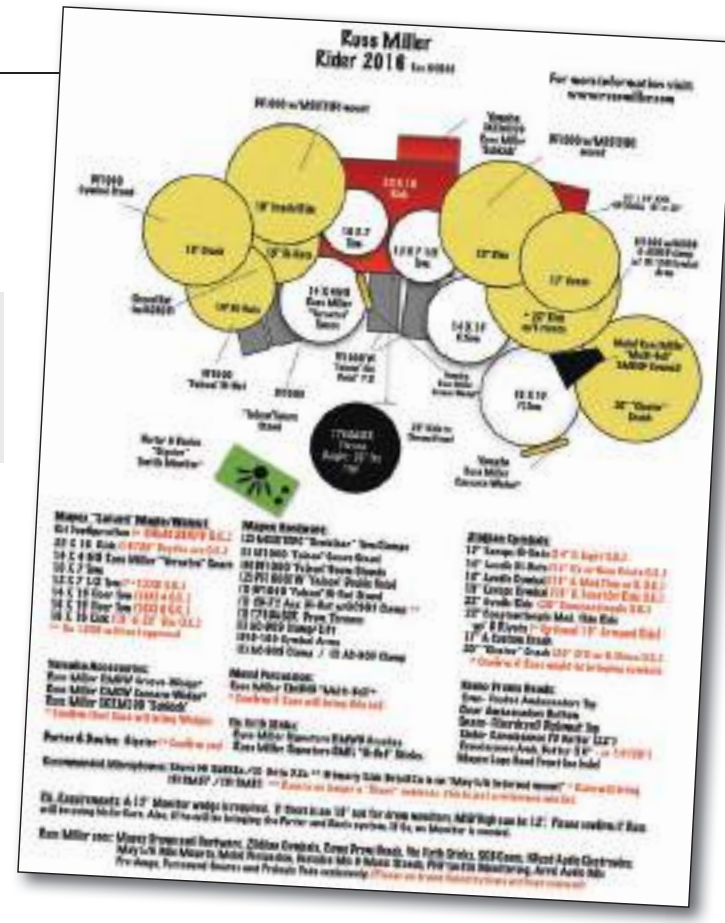
by Russ Miller

I find joy in organizing my gear. A University of Miami classmate, the great pianist/composer Jeff Babko, once reminded me that I would come into rehearsals with the Art Blakey Ensemble with road cases that had my name stenciled on them. It made me laugh, but it's true! I always loved tracking my inventory, and it's probably why I've been so involved in equipment design over the years.

> "I came up with a name for my organizing metric: first-order retrievability."
>
> —Adam Savage (co-host of Discovery Channel's *MythBusters*)

In this second article about organizing gear, we'll discuss creating and understanding your drumkit rider. A rider is a sheet that includes your equipment requirements and layout for a given performance. This document can be the difference between a great and a not-so-great performance. Of course, if you always have your own equipment with you, you don't need to have a detailed and updated rider. However, even on the biggest tours I've done there were shows that required me to use rental gear. Some artists don't have the budget to fly or ship equipment to every show, which is why having a rider available is very important. And the clearer the rider is, the more likely you are to get what you want for the show.

Let's take a look at what specific information needs to be on a rider. Your rider doesn't have to be as detailed as mine, but the basic structure should be the same.



The Layout

Use a word-processing program like Word or Pages to put together a basic diagram of your kit. This helps the production crew visualize the setup, and it gives the backline crew the basic positioning for each drum and cymbal so that the kit can be set up reasonably close to how you want it before you arrive at the venue. I even include the positioning of the throne from the bass drum as well as its height, just in case my drum tech or I can't get to the gear before we hit the stage.

The Equipment List

Notice that the sizes and model numbers of each instrument are included in the diagram and in an equipment list. This helps the production company people when they're doing a checklist for which gear is going in and out of the venue.

It's also important to include possible substitutions for each piece of gear on your equipment list. All of the substitutions on my list are labeled in red. Including substitutions allows the crew to make decisions on which gear to provide without needing to call or email you.

Info and Recommendations

The third part of the rider can include microphone requests (be flexible with models and brands, since most engineers have their own preferences) as well as monitoring information and a list of your endorsements, if you have any. It's important to include endorsements when you have national and international contracts. You wouldn't want to show up playing the wrong company's drums on a television appearance, for instance. I make it clear that, because of contractual obligations, I can't substitute brands of equipment without approval.

What You're Carrying to the Gig

You will notice that I have some asterisks on the rider. These indicate which pieces I will have with me, or specific substitutions that will *not* work. For example, I will not approve a 9x12 tom because it causes everything to be positioned too high. Again, the goal is to cut down on unnecessary communication between you and the production crew and to make the job easier for everyone involved.

As you're creating your rider, remember to be reasonable. Don't require obscure pieces or sizes, and be flexible when things have to be substituted. You may also want to create different riders for different situations. I have a clinic rider, a basic backline rider, and a full rider with my most current setup.

See you next month!

Russ Miller has recorded and/or performed with Ray Charles, Cher, Nelly Furtado, and the Psychedelic Furs and has played on soundtracks for *The Boondock Saints*, *Rugrats Go Wild*, and *Resident Evil: Apocalypse*, among others. For more info, visit russmiller.com.

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IN MEMORIAM

Raul Rekow

Longtime *Modern Drummer* contributor **Robin Tolleson**, who interviewed the percussionist for a story on Santana's rhythm section way back in 1982, recalls his power and passion.

"It's not a hundred percent rock 'n' roll, it's not a hundred percent Latin music, it's not a hundred percent jazz, and it's not a hundred percent funk," a then-twenty-seven-year-old Raul Rekow told me, describing his gig alongside Armando Peraza and Orestes Vilató in Santana. "It's a little bit of all these ingredients blended together. But the Latin percussion has to be in the foreground…with Carlos's soaring guitar."

Taking over conga chores in 1977, Rekow, who passed away last November at the age of sixty-one, would become "the heart beat of the band," in Carlos Santana's words. "His presence on the stage was one of power, grace, collaboration, and joy. He redefined what it means to be a conga player." Other percussionists would come and go, but Rekow's smile and arena-shaking beats were a constant in Santana for thirty-four years. "He lived and breathed it," says drummer Dennis Chambers, who played alongside Rekow in Santana for twelve of those years. "He told me that gig was meant for him.

"Santana's music is very percussion heavy," Chambers continues. "The conga drum is very respected there and has a serious purpose. With the right guy in the chair, that's when it really sings. And Raul was the right guy for the job. I mean, between Raul and Armando [Peraza], they actually invented rock conga as far as I'm concerned." Rekow also recorded with Whitney Houston, Aretha Franklin, and Herbie Hancock, among others.

Rekow started playing congas after hearing the Santana Blues Band, and he built up his chops at the regular drum circles at Aquatic Park in San Francisco. While playing in a Santana cover band called Soul Sacrifice, Rekow was asked to join the Latin rockers Malo, featuring Carlos Santana's brother Jorge, and was then invited to join the Santana band itself. Though he was initially filling in for the elder Peraza, later the two joined forces in the group. "It's definitely an honor to play with a true master," Rekow told *MD* in 1982. "It's going to school. If I want to learn something, I'll put on an old album of Tito Puente or Armando or Mongo [Santamaria]. That's where you learn."

Rekow spoke to *MD* again shortly after Peraza's death in 2013. "I was able to learn his style enough to play inside what he was doing," Raul said, "to make it sound like he was playing even more than he was sometimes. I loved that challenge. I love holding the groove. I love being able to make the groove sound fresh and new. I've been trying to come up with the proper term, and the closest thing I can come up with is 'to play with a restrained urgency.'"

Santana percussionist Karl Perazzo talks about Rekow's musical fingerprint: "The sound, the tone. Individual tone. Didn't need sticks, didn't need a volume knob, didn't need watts. He could drive the band with his hands and get a sound that you would not believe."

Perazzo knew Rekow from the age of twelve. "Raul would take the shirt off his back for you," Perazzo says. "And his music was electrifying. His energy was like a portal for the listener to go through. He was just something to watch. I don't believe he's gone, I swear to you. The only way I can put it is, I feel like Robin losing Batman."

"Sometimes I'd get real comfortable in the drum chair," Chambers recalls, "where I know the music, taking it easy, and I'd look over to my left, and here's Raul with that ponytail, head thrown back—he's gettin' it, you know? And it made me step up my game. I've never heard anybody hit a drum as hard. I miss him dearly."

"He was always on full force," Perazzo says. "There will never be another one like him. The greatest rock conga player in the world." •

Maurice White

Earth, Wind & Fire's founding drummer and singer passed away in February after a long bout with Parkinson's disease. *Modern Drummer* contributor **Drew Schultz** remembers the artist, and the man.

Maurice White front and center with Earth, Wind and Fire, and as he appeared on the cover of the 9[illegible] bum *Live in Tokyo* by pianist Ramsey Lewis, with whom he recorded and performed extensively in the mid to late '[illegible].

As the founder, lead singer, songwriter, producer, and drummer/percussionist for Earth, Wind & Fire, Maurice White was massively influential on an endless list of musicians who took an art lesson from EWF's funky canvas of piercing horns, tight-knit rhythm guitar parts, multilayered percussion, and soaring vocals. EWF scored countless enduring hits, including "Shining Star," "September," "Sing a Song," and "Let's Groove." Beyond the group, White's accomplished career as a drummer included recordings with Etta James, Muddy Waters, Fontella Bass, and Billy Stewart, and a long stint as a member of the Ramsey Lewis Trio.

Musicians at all stages can take a lesson from White's journey. His drumming focused on supporting the groove over flash. Leaving his high-profile gig with Ramsey Lewis to start EWF was a bold move, from being an established sideman to an as-yet-unproven bandleader and vocalist. By starting his own ARC label, he demonstrated an ability to navigate the creative and business sides of the industry. His songwriting bucked trends and embraced Egyptian mythology, astrology, love, and undying optimism. His vocals often drifted beyond lyrics into joyful melismas exuding enthusiasm and energy. On songs like "Be Ever Wonderful," "On Your Face," and "Shining Star," White showed an earnest belief in all of us. His grace in publicly dealing with Parkinson's disease showed resilience in the face of adversity.

In 2007, I was flown out to L.A. and asked to interview Maurice for a website he was working on. What I remember was a man who'd been to the top of the music world but was still willing to give several hours to a star-struck, stuttering young drummer striving to forge a path along the same road he'd traveled decades before. I remember a man who, although visibly uncomfortable due to his struggle with Parkinson's, refused to cut the interview short.

White displayed a humility and compassion that went above and beyond. He offered his advice to pursue the music that moves you no matter what stands in your way. He encouraged writing songs that first speak to you, opening up the possibility of earnestly speaking to others. He talked about years of dedication, trial and error, and perseverance needed to lead a band to the heights that EWF reached.

White showed me that you can fill more than one role in the music industry, that you can cast as wide a net of ambitions and dreams as you want, and forge success in all of them. Finally, he showed me that even if you do fulfill all of those ambitions, you're never too big to give your time to a young musician who wants to find his or her own way.

Although Maurice is no longer with us, his playing and singing will continue to ring out as long as his music and message are carried forward by those of us he continues to impact today. In his spirit, I urge us all to keep our head to the sky, and lift while we climb.

CRITIQUE

RECORDINGS Taking the Reins

Daniel Freedman *Imagine That*

The drummer's expansive African/Middle Eastern/Latin groove vocabulary has graced the work of Anat Cohen and Third World Love. Here he artfully mixes those influences and more.

On his third disc as a leader, drummer/composer Daniel Freedman surrounds himself with longtime comrades Omer Avital (bass), Jason Lindner (keyboards), Lionel Loueke (guitar and vocals), and Gilmar Gomes (percussion), and, on one song, Angélique Kidjo, who contributes a vocal cameo. The resulting "family" vibe is unmistakable in this intimate, lyrical, and uplifting set of world-groove jazz that also encompasses rock and R&B elements. Freedman and Gomes' rhythmic lock is tight yet broadly breathing. The irresistible opener, "Determined Soul," is a slinky Afrobeat grabber that Freedman describes as "almost a boogaloo," while the Middle Eastern flavor of "Big in Yemen" is defined by its loping, hypnotic groove. On the aptly titled finale, "The Sisters Dance," Freedman and Gomes drive the Malian-powered rhythm to ecstatic peaks. Another benchmark for this enlightened and exceptionally musical drummer. (Anzic) **Jeff Potter**

Jaimeo Brown Transcendence *Work Songs*

This sophomore release serves as a sequel to the drummer/composer's acclaimed debut, *Transcendence*.

Jaimeo Brown is an impressive drummer, but that's secondary here. Though he does weigh in with some powerful grooves ("For Mama Lucy") and expressive—though unpretentious—free soloing ("Paterson"), Brown's brilliance is foremost as a conceptualist. He conjures fascinating sonic tableaus, weaving instrumental threads throughout samples of archival recordings of work songs. The sources are global but primarily drawn from the Southern African-American experience, stretching from the cotton fields to the notorious Parchman Farm penitentiary. Elements of jazz, gritty roots blues, hip-hop, electronic music, and rock are blended in a hypnotic, cinematic continuum. Saxophonists JD Allen and Jaleel Shaw react to the shifting backdrops with passionate, interactive solos. This latest collaboration with guitarist/coproducer Chris Sholar firmly substantiates Brown as a visionary. It's mesmerizing, haunting, uplifting, and—true to the ensemble's name—transcendent. (Motéma) **Jeff Potter**

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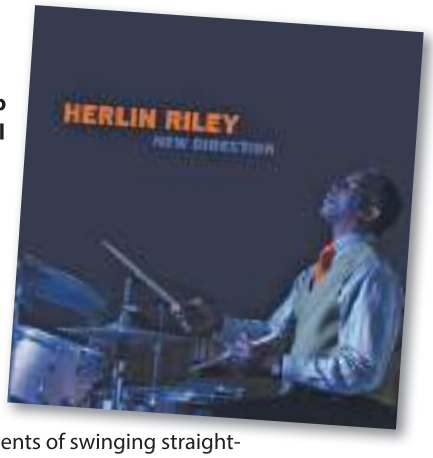
Herlin Riley *New Direction*



On his third disc as a leader, Riley serves up a mix of jazz, blues, and Afro-Cuban as well as grooves from his native New Orleans.

Throughout his long, high-profile association with Wynton Marsalis, Herlin Riley demonstrated impeccable chops, vast historical knowledge, and superb taste—qualities also abundant in this lively set focusing on his own compositions. À la Art Blakey, Riley surrounds himself with impressive upcoming under-thirties, in a trumpet/sax frontline quintet. There are moments of swinging straight-ahead and deep shuffle, but Riley also drives the asymmetrical funk of "The Big Banana" and the hairy 4/4-plus-3/8 comping of "Hiccup Smooth." He lends smooth locomotion to such twisty tunes, soloing over them with commanding ease. On the up-tempo Afro-Cuban "Connection to Congo Square," Riley is ablaze, interlocking with guest conguero Pedrito Martínez. Appropriately, the finale, "Tutti Ma," gets down to some second-line grooving, with Riley delivering rollicking vocals and some mean tambourine. (Mack Avenue) **Jeff Potter**

Michael Lauren All Stars *Once Upon a Time in Portugal*

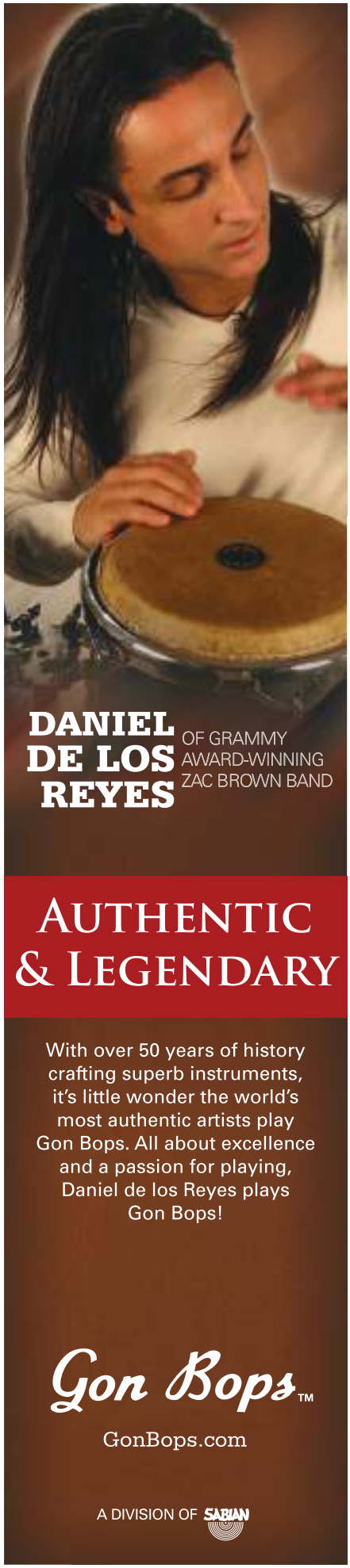
Stop here for a lesson on how to support a band, without losing an ounce of driving swing.

With *Once Upon a Time in Portugal*, drummer Michael Lauren delivers a no-nonsense blowing date of hard-bop-style jazz featuring a septet assembled in Portugal. This is sturdy, swinging stuff, played by musicians paying homage to a sound from long ago, but filtered through modern sensibilities. Lauren, who taught at New York City's Drummers Collective for years, exhibits a big band touch throughout, though his feel (and the drumset production) lends the tunes a pleasant air of softness. On "Outras Viagens," Lauren's ride patterns are purposeful and deliberate, concluding with melodic solo breaks that give a wink to Philly Joe. On "Seven Ties Corp.," the drummer lays down a funky, odd-time backbeat before straightening things out. Lauren doesn't bring much attention to himself with hot licks, instead keeping it tight on closed hi-hats for the vibes solo here and opting to set up a trumpet figure with some easy cymbal off-beats there. For him, "It don't mean a thing…" are words to live by. (cdbaby.com) **Ilya Stemkovsky**

Don Peretz *Lalita*

Spliced beats and textural ambience go well together in this electro-stew.

There's a decided seriousness to drummer Don Peretz's newest offering of synth-drenched electronica and futuristic loops, though a composed playfulness does peek through the clouds on several impressive and organic beat-heavy tracks. Opener "Sieve" is all down-tempo, after-party chill-out music, Peretz playing a ghost-note-laden cymbal backbeat on his snare, while "Sugarcookie" is filled with broken-up stutter patterns and hip polyrhythmic flams thrown in at random moments. Later, the drummer floats over the synth vamp in "Dorothea," basically soloing freely over ominous chords and playing with controlled dynamics and a freedom from limitations. This is heavily manipulated material, diced up in the digital realm, so what's live or programmed is beside the point. The sound is top-notch, though, and the second half of the record has a subdued and subtle rhythmic vibe. But Peretz still presents a human element and enough impressive chops to appeal to Jojo Mayer and Mark Guiliana fans. (Deepdig) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



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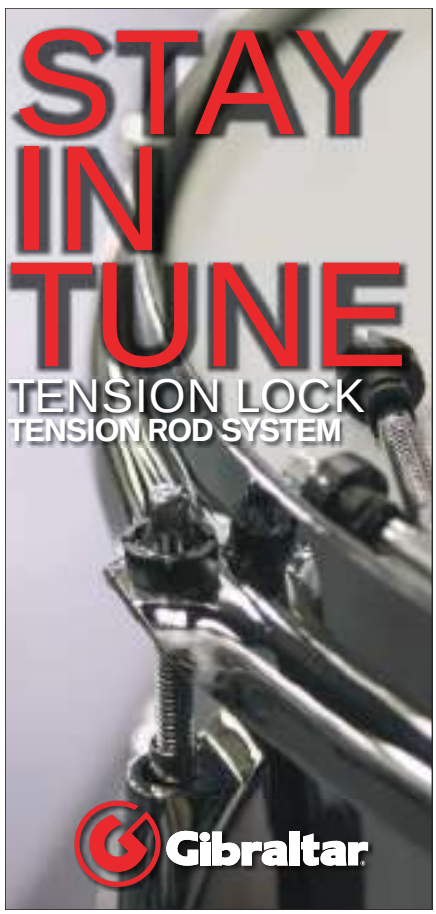
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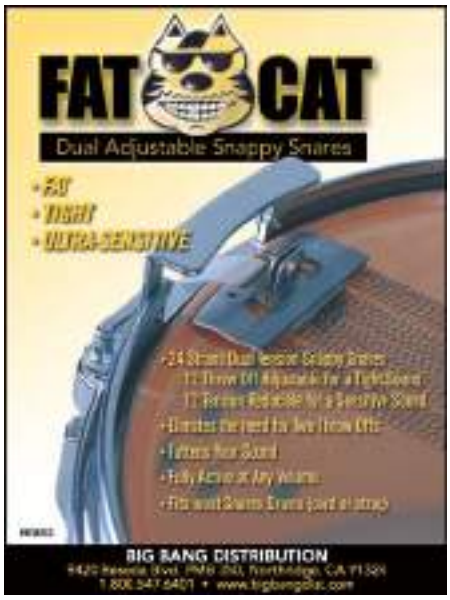
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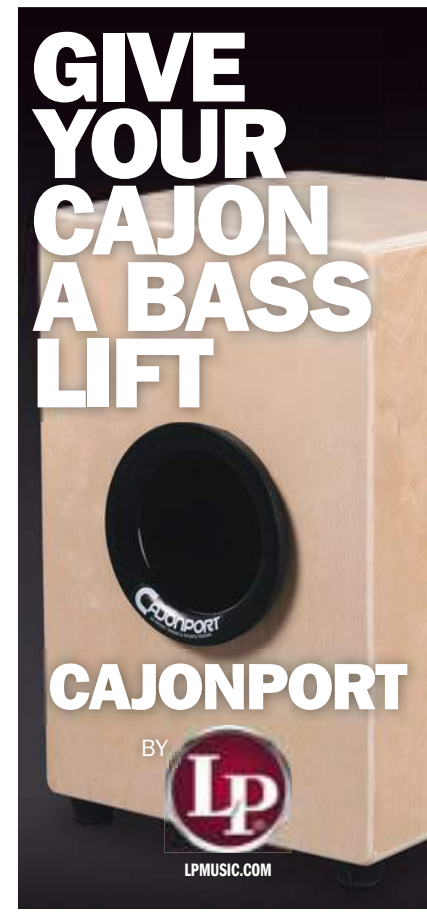
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Black Sabbath
Paranoid

In 1970, just a few months after its first album, the band returned with a fresh batch of songs and blazed a trail through rock that still burns hot today.

The four original members of Black Sabbath have proven themselves iron men simply by staying alive. Nevertheless, before the legendary debauchery, the late-'70s departure of frontman Ozzy Osbourne, the sporadic reunions, and recently the sober, highly successful "The End" run that has bypassed drummer Bill Ward, these were once wee lads honing their approach with their second album.

Although the beast from Birmingham created one of the earliest versions of heavy metal, this is no one-trick pony. The widely influential *Paranoid*—the quartet's commercial and artistic high point—offers a dynamic experience with relief from the bombast. It's important to remember that Sabbath got its start as a heavy blues band, in the days when artists like Led Zeppelin and the Jeff Beck Group were filtering this most American of genres through a British lens, creating beautiful images all (okay, mostly) their own. Black Sabbath, as the group's name suggests, and as we hear on its self-titled 1970 debut, was ominous, dark, frightening—a horror movie for the ears.

As with all great bands, each piece played a vital role. Guitarist Tony Iommi was the riffmaster, forging clear, straightforward, unforgettable parts, plus soulful solos, over and over again. Osbourne had the charisma and the voice to deliver the band's gloomy menace, inviting people in while scaring the hell out of them. Geezer Butler wrote most of the lyrics, packed with genre-defining imagery, and followed Iommi's leads with booming bass lines that alternated between heavy and melodic. And Bill Ward tied it all together with a flourish, tucking into the warm cocoon of Butler's bass and then flying forth in a flutter of colorful ideas. They were essentially writing the early-metal playbook, even if they didn't know it.

One of Ward's gifts on *Paranoid* is complementing the guitar parts with unexpected slashes and bashes. Opener "War Pigs" is an orgy of mixed-subdivision fills that make drummers laugh with glee, but equally fun is Ward's groove over Iommi's solos, starting at 3:30 and 6:08, with a dotted-8th-note snare figure ending each bar. At 6:29, Ward lets loose with an enormous fill that helps blast Iommi toward guitar heaven. One question: Does the band regret creating the silly tape speed-up at the end? Time hasn't necessarily treated it well.

Another thing that feels dated on *Paranoid* is Ward's tubby tom sounds, especially on the higher drums. Although the "bonk, bonk" offers a certain charm for fans who've loved the album for decades, the tones aren't befitting of the music's heaviness. The sound fares better when a high tom is used more subtly, as in the stuttering triplet after beat 4 of the main riff to "Electric Funeral"—an inspired touch. Regardless, Ward helps to lay the groundwork for the type of tribal tom pounding that would animate later metal. In the last section of the justifiably iconic "Iron Man," he begins with speedy 16ths on the hi-hats and then transfers the pattern to the toms, building in intensity before crisply accenting the song's unison final notes.

The light-and-shade cautionary tale "Hand of Doom" provides an abundance of signature Ward moments, starting with a funky rimclick groove that ascends into adventurous fills and a bouncing quarter-note shuffle. At 3:37, over a razor-sharp Iommi riff, Ward playfully adds cool offbeat bass drum notes between guitar crunches. As Ozzy describes a descent into heroin addiction, Ward comments ever more furiously between the lyrics. Likewise, "Fairies Wear Boots," with its plodding snare quarter notes in the intro and weighty but laid-back feel, could only be the work of Sabbath's main man. Ward fills spaces with hand/foot triplets that lurch around the toms. His swinging vibe once the verses start—and the fact that Ward plays the verses on the *ride*, against brilliant snare ghosting—helps make this section a classic within a classic.

Michael Parillo

***Paranoid* (1970)**
War Pigs/Luke's Wall • Paranoid • Planet Caravan • Iron Man • Electric Funeral • Hand of Doom • Rat Salad • Jack the Stripper/Fairies Wear Boots

Ozzy Osbourne: vocals
Tony Iommi: guitar
Geezer Butler: bass
Bill Ward: drums
Produced by Roger Bain for Tony Hall Enterprises

Hot Stuff

Among the proto-metal epics on *Paranoid*, the title track stands out as a chiseled piece of hard-pop perfection. And to think that it was written in haste at the end of the sessions and then tacked on. In two minutes and fifty-three seconds, Bill Ward displays most of his hallmarks. The groove, in lockstep with Geezer Butler's bass, is right in the pocket. Tight single-stroke snare fills enhance the chugging feel. (Elsewhere, "War Pigs" shows Ward's way with singles that go around the kit, "Fairies Wear Boots" amps things up at 3:28 with machine-gun singles in unison with the guitars, and the brief drum solo "Rat Salad" highlights the type of fast, Buddy Rich–inspired snare singles beloved by big-band-influenced British drummers like Ward.) And, crucially, snare flams mix beautifully with the guitar stabs by Tony Iommi that follow each line of the verses. ("Hand of Doom" and "War Pigs" feature creative use of flams on the toms.)

An interesting curio in the 2016 deluxe reissue of the album, amid a batch of instrumental-mix extras, is an early version of "Paranoid" that reveals its foundation as a love song of sorts. Once the lyrics were updated, the band had the magic track that's still played on rock radio every day.

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KIT OF THE MONTH

Rocktopus

"This is part of an ongoing series of mine known as Rocktopus," says Milwaukee, Wisconsin, artist Justin Stone, who creates instruments inspired by octopi. "Some are fully functional and playable instruments, while others are purely sculptures." Stone was captivated by the idea that drummers "use what they have to the best of their abilities." He explains, "A creature with eight arms could play some wicked drums."

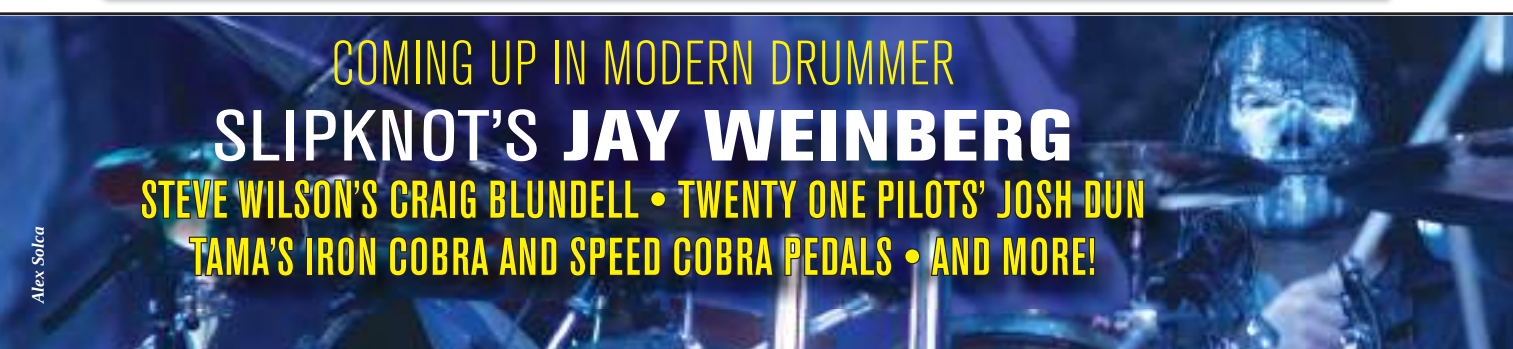
According to Stone, this particular eight-legged drumming creature is modeled after the wonderpus species. "Pretty much everything about this species drew me in—the incredible forms and patterns of the skin, the brilliant colors and contrast, and the rainbow abalone shell. Even the name wonderpus screamed drummer to me."

An off-chance discovery of a virtual drum trove kick-started the project. "I happened upon someone getting rid of some blank shells," he says. "After being inspired, I began the quest for all the other components to Frankenstein together this drumset. I fabricated several of the shells to get the sizes I wanted. Afterward, I cut and soaked the wood in water, wrapped it onto a circular form, glued it, and let it cure. After staining the insides, I wrapped the entire set in a genuine rainbow abalone shell veneer. Using an industrial spray adhesive, I clamped and formed the veneers to the drum shells. Next, I polished the shells and finished it with a high-gloss clear coat. Finally, I drilled the holes for the hardware.

"The setup had a lot to do with the octopus and the question, *What's the best way to get the most variety of drums in a space where an octopus could get to them all?*" Stone continues. "The drums are a 5x12 snare, 1x4, 2x4, 3x6, 5x8, 5x9, and 6x10 rack toms, a 10x13 floor tom, and a 13x17 kick drum, all with chrome hardware, while the cymbals are a 10" hi-hat, a 14" crash, a 15" ride, a 12" China crash, and a 7" and 4" splash stack." Stone says that the cymbals were finished with a wire brush, and the kit includes a 4" cowbell.

"It plays pretty well for not being a full-size kit," Stone says, "and it sounds pretty bright. The drumset took about 150 hours, and the octopus took about 200 hours." You can check out more at jstoneart.com.

Photo Submission: Hi-res digital photos, along with descriptive text, may be emailed to kitofthemonth@moderndrummer.com. Show "Kit of the Month" in the subject line.



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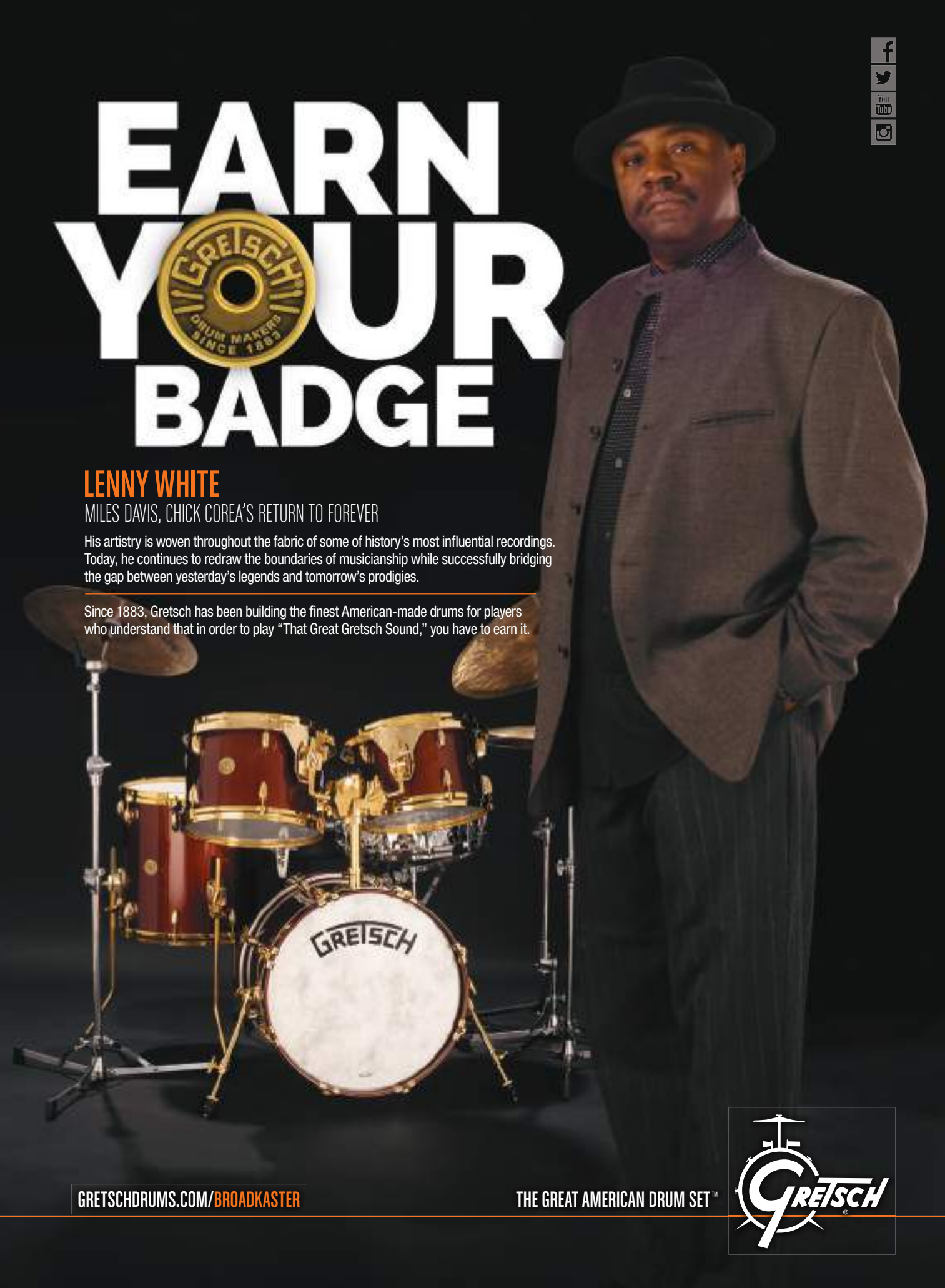

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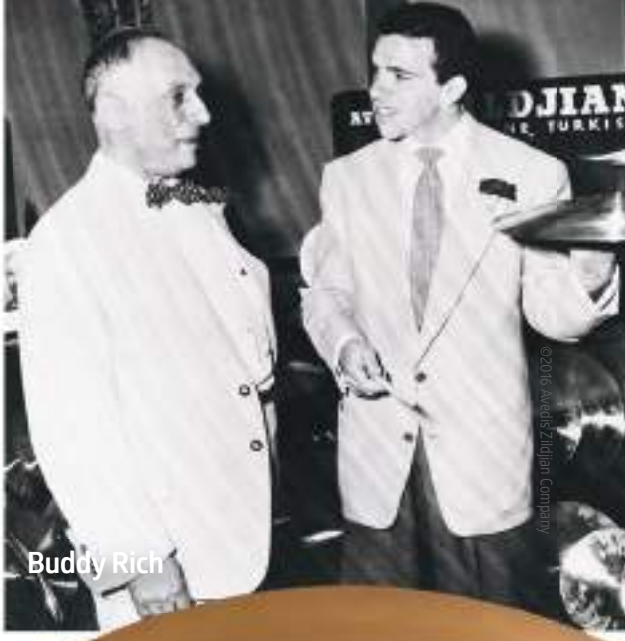
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